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Building on a Garden Plot

Ground Source Heat Pumps: Costs & Savings

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Oak Frame, SIPs & Timber Frame

Windows & Doors

Flooring, Stairs & Cladding Systems

Should You Build a Passivhaus?

Pros & Cons of this Eco Standard

REAL HOME INSPIRATION

Modern Self Build in Historic Setting | Light-Filled Extension to a Victorian Cottage | Creating a New Barn-Style Home

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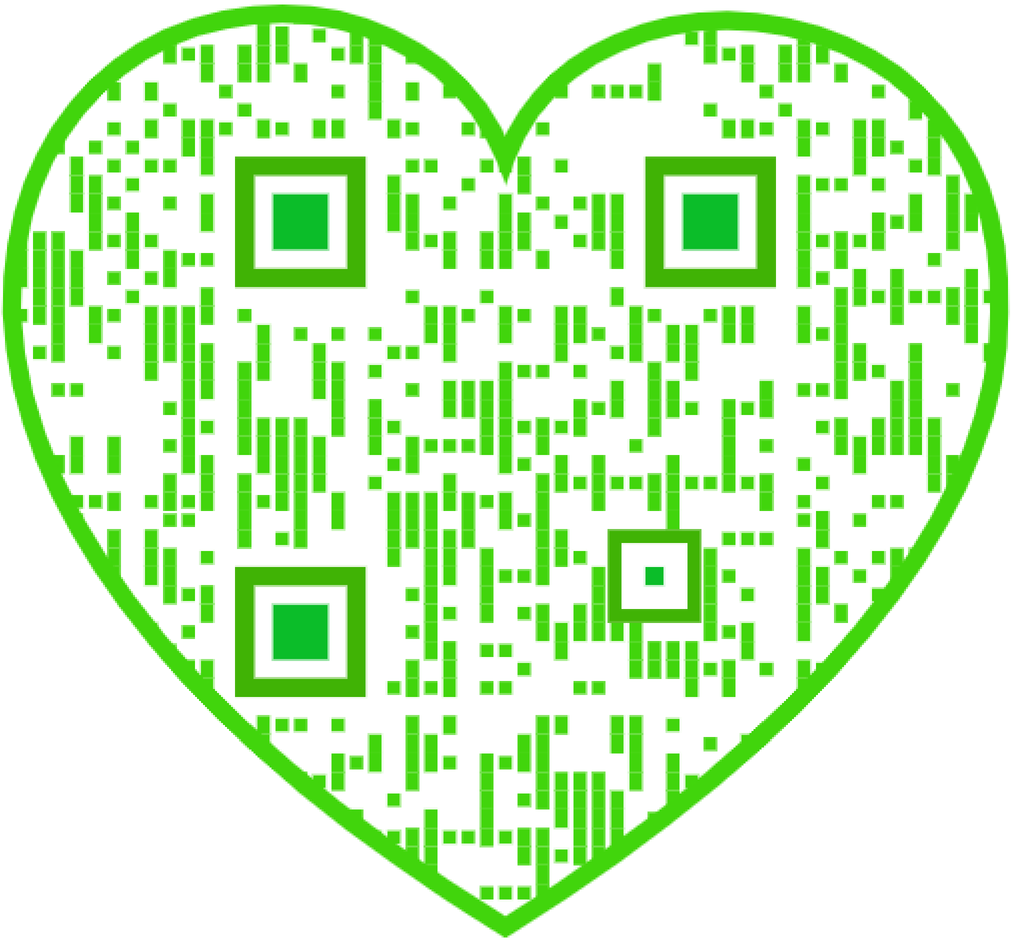
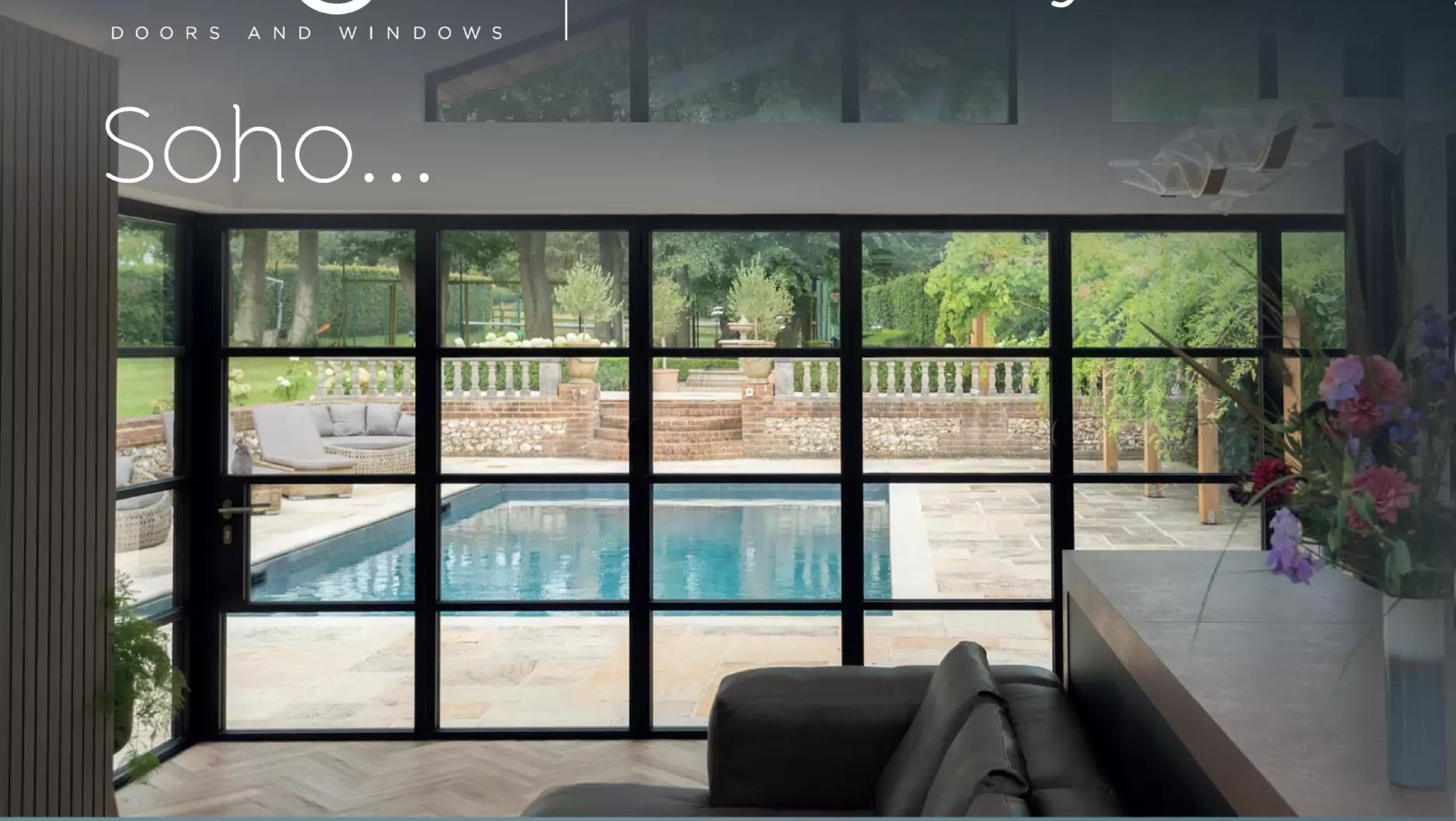


origin
DOORS AND WINDOWS

What's your style?

Soho...



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Welcome

By the time you're leafing through this edition of your favourite magazine, we'll have just wrapped up the latest Build It Live show, our South East event in Kent. The shows are a fantastic place to gain ideas and first-hand advice from our magazine experts and trusted exhibitors, not to mention experience the latest products in person – so I do hope to see you all at a Build It Live soon! It's immensely rewarding to meet our readers face-to-face and play a role, however significant, in your project journeys. Visit www.builditlive.co.uk for upcoming dates in 2025.

Back to this issue, and we've got a great mix of content for you to dive into, whatever stage you're at with your project. If you're looking for inspiration, then don't miss our real-life case studies, complete with learning points and project costs (from page 23). Plus, Sander Tel picks out some great schemes by architectural technologists on page 17, and Erika Chaffey examines some great floorplan ideas for extensions (page 65). Our guide to Passivhaus (page 48) is a must-read for those of you wondering how far to go on energy performance, while we also have practical guides to gaining consent on a garden plot (page 96), ground source heat pump costs (page 102), getting re-roofing right (page 61) and Scarlett Deamer's tips on integrating kitchen islands (page 56). And all that on top of our special section on building and fitting out your home with timber products (starting on page 71), along with our free Self Build Directory to help you shortlist the best suppliers.

In other news, Emily and I are about to start our next project – retrofitting a Victorian semi to restore its character and bring it up to scratch as a 21st century family home. The previous owners were in the house for 50 years. So, while it was clearly much-loved, it's become a major project with bags of potential. Follow our progress on Instagram (@batesmith.renovation) and stay tuned for chunkier updates in the mag later in the year. Enjoy!

Chris

CHRIS BATESMITH, CONTENT DIRECTOR

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FLOORPLANS FOR EXTENSIONS

COVER IMAGE: A STUNNING EXTENSION PROJECT BY COLEMAN ANDERSON ARCHITECTS (PAGE 65). PHOTO: MIKEY REED

MEET THE TEAM

SANDER TEL is Build It's digital features editor. Alongside putting together content at www.self-build.co.uk, he's showcasing great homes by architectural technologists (page 17).

ERIKA CHAFFEY is Build It's features writer. This month she's sharing how to design an eye-catching entrance (page 52) and exploring popular floorplans for extensions (page 65).

SCARLETT DEAMER is Build It's editorial assistant. From page 9, she's sourcing the latest news, products and materials; while on page 56 she's looking at how to create an effective kitchen island.

NIGEL GRIFFITHS is Build It's sustainability expert, specialising in eco building and renewable energy. On page 99, he's investigating the pros and cons of rainwater harvesting.

JULIAN OWEN is Build It's design doctor and a respected self build architect with his own practice. To read his latest advice and inspiring guides, visit our website at www.self-build.co.uk/julian

JULIA RIDDLE is a planning consultant with a wealth of experience in self and custom build housing, and a regular at Build It Live. Read Julia's planning guides at self-build.co.uk/julia

OPINDER LIDDAR is a Build It Award-winning architect and director of Lapd Architects. In this issue, he's revealing the inside track on the government's planning updates (page 104).

MARTIN GAINE is a former council case officer turned independent planning consultant, and a regular expert at Build It Live. On page 96 he looks at how to get planning on a garden plot.

ALAN TIERNEY is a historic buildings expert and conservation specialist. On page 61, he shares his top tips for a re-roofing project. For more advice visit Build It Live or head to self-build.co.uk/alan

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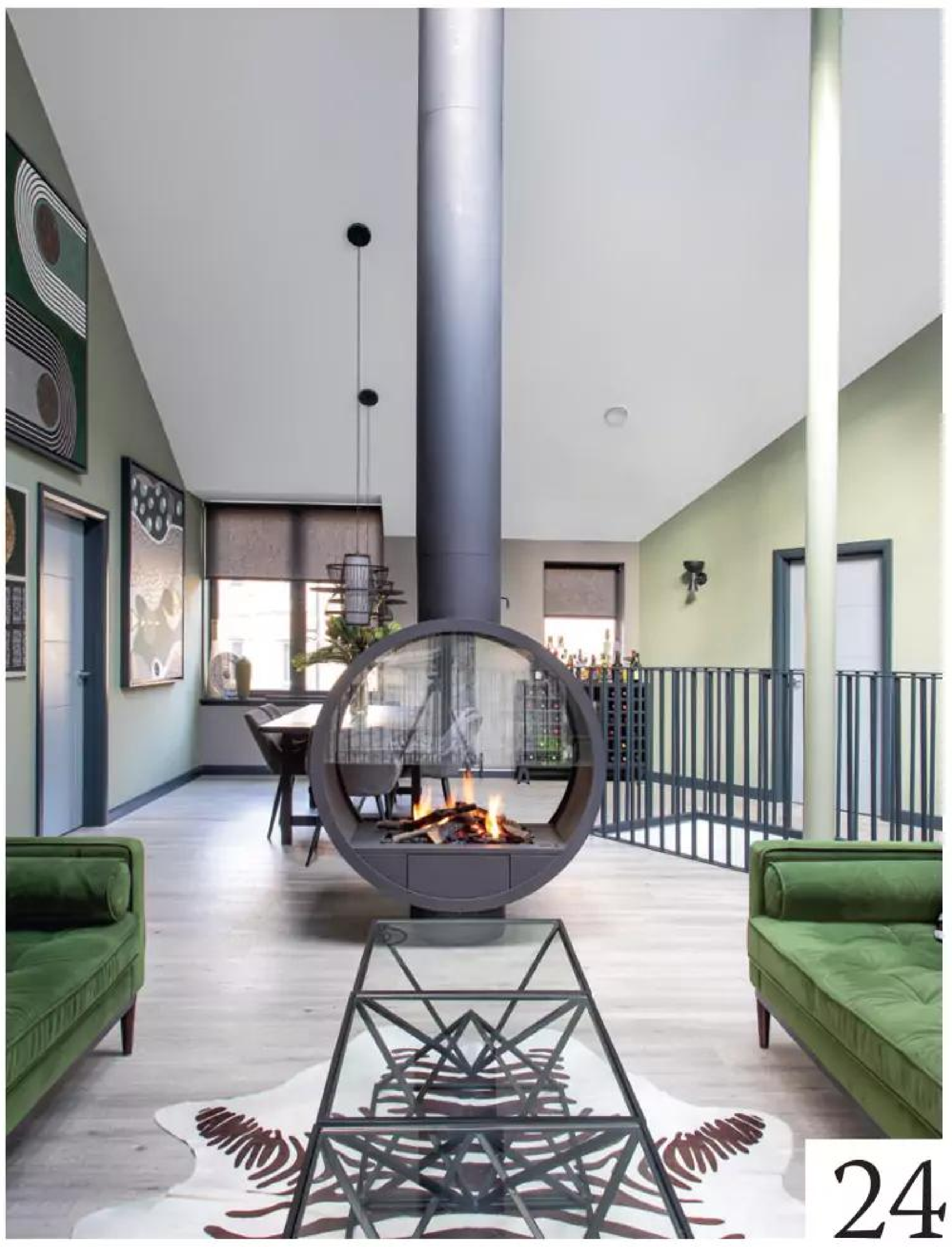
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Ian Turkington gave new life to a cramped Victorian cottage by building a modern extension with green upgrades. The neutral interiors and exposed structures provide the perfect setting for the owner's art collection

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Guide to kitchen islands 56
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Re-roofing a house 61
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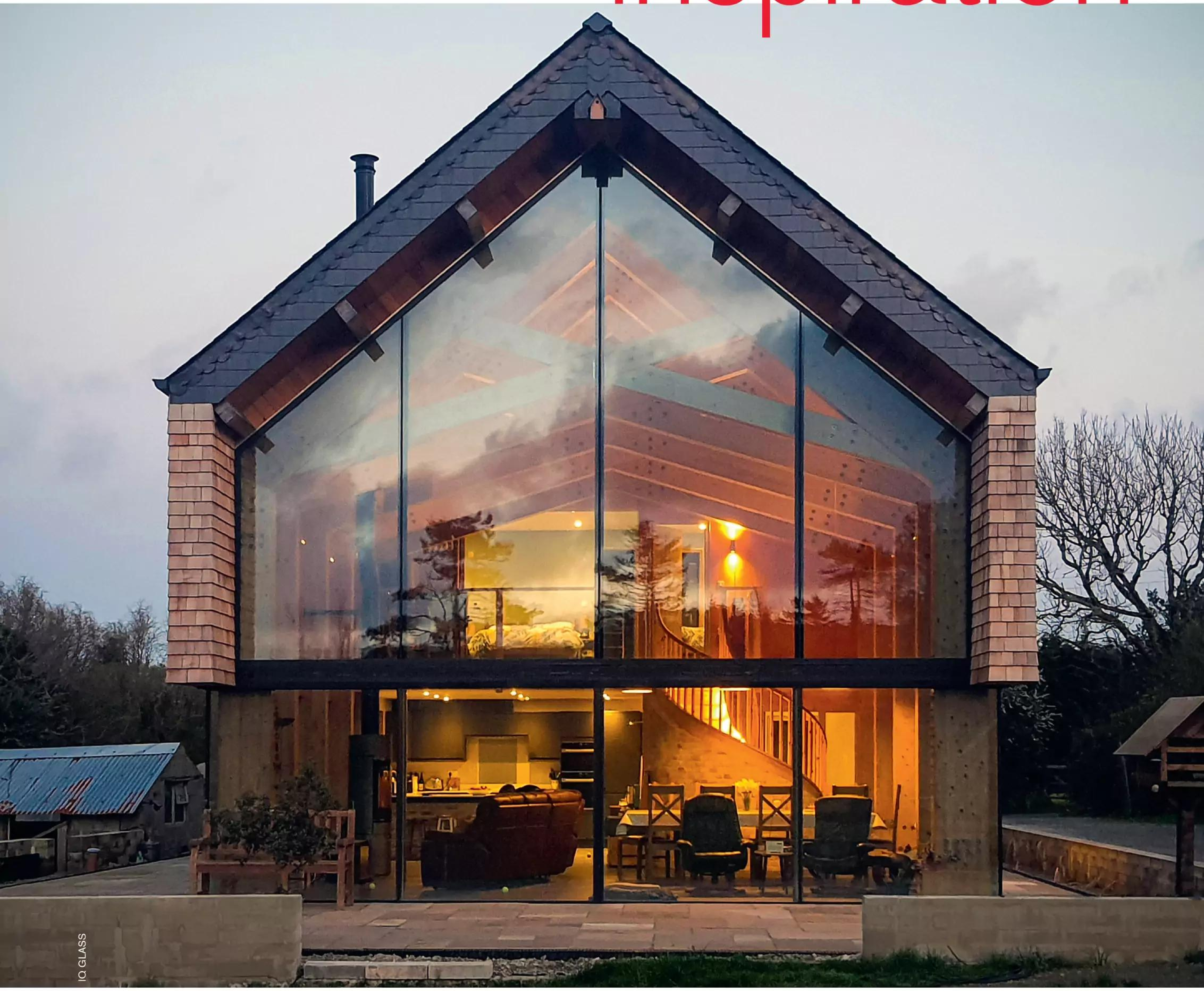
Discover more about Paul and Mandy's *self-build story*.

Build It AWARDS 2024 WINNER Best Oak Frame Home

inspiration


IQ GLASS

Breathtaking timber & glass house

Create Design South West designed this striking self build in the scenic Cornish countryside. The unique scheme successfully fuses a contemporary aesthetic with the charm of its picturesque, tranquil environment.

The detached two-bedroom house replaces a variety of old, derelict greenhouses. Drawn to the rustic character of the location, the owners wanted to ensure their home was connected to the surrounding landscape, with plenty of natural sunlight and uninterrupted views.

IQ Glass created a structural glass facade within the glulam frame, which draws in lots of sunshine that seamlessly connects interior and exterior. A slim framed sliding door wraps around the perimeter of the building, creating a U-shaped configuration, which perfectly supports the overall goal of creating transparency between the structure and the outside. New Sieger casement windows have a sleek, slimline design to underpin the building's modern look and come with an advanced glazing system that delivers excellent thermal efficiency and security for the owners.

Internally, the exposed wooden beams are the main focal point and determine the colour palette, with warm, neutral tones that complements the structural craftsmanship. The airy, open-plan kitchen and living area features a striking curved staircase that elegantly ties the space to the cosy mezzanine floor above.

To find out more call 020 7021 0267 or visit createdesign.org / call 01494 722880 or visit iqglassuk.com

PROJECT OF THE MONTH

Verdant House

by CAN

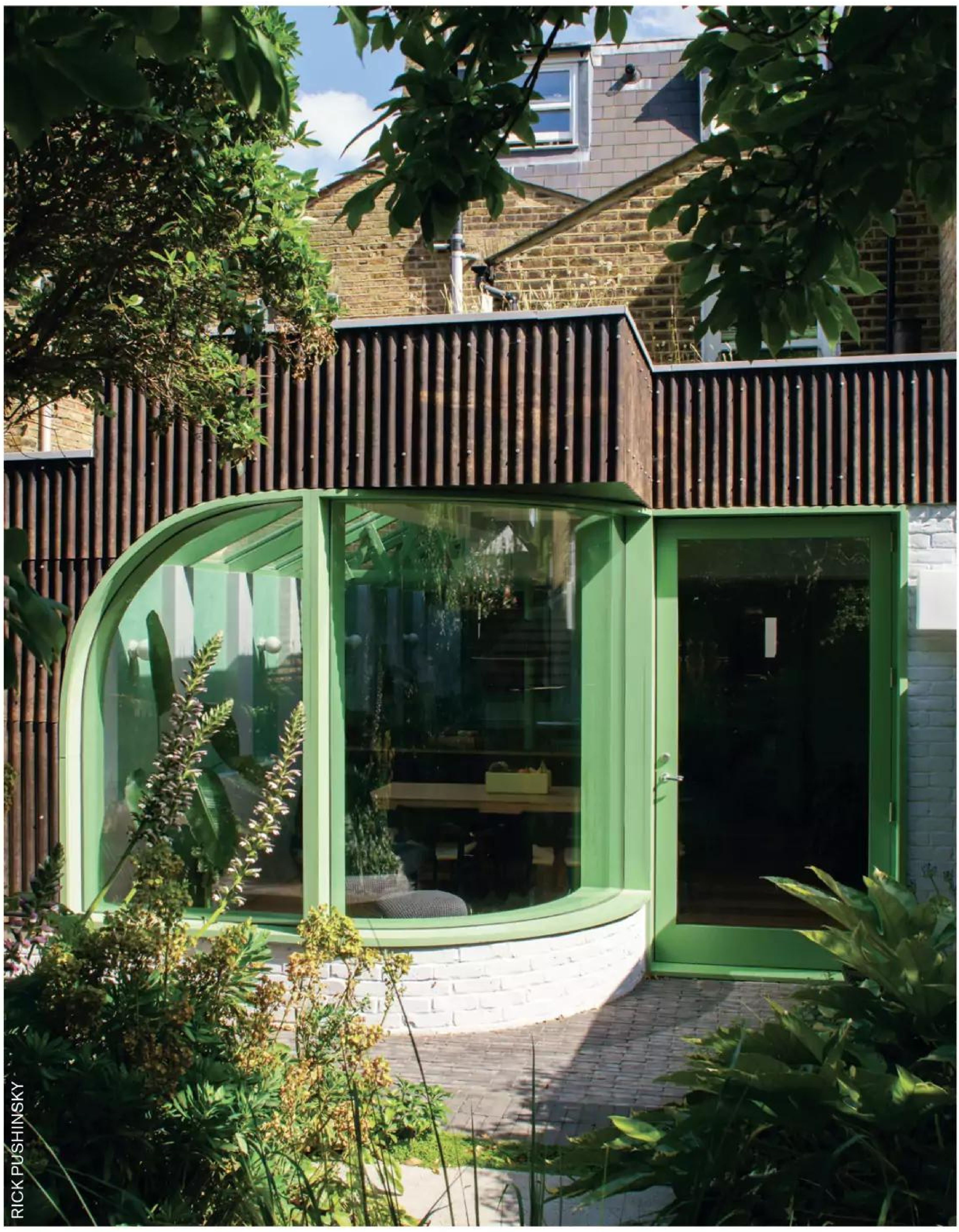
CAN has redesigned the layout of this terraced house in Stoke Newington and introduced a glulam framed extension to the side and rear, to create a vibrant and functional home. The previously disjointed ground floor has been transformed into a spacious open-plan kitchen and dining area that seamlessly transitions to the tranquil garden beyond, via a bespoke curved window and glazed door.

Inside, cleverly chosen full-height curtains and Douglas fir shutters allow the family to alter the spaces as their requirements change. Within the extension, the floor level has been carefully lowered to elevate the sense of openness; an aspect amplified by the inclusion of rooflights that bathe the room with warm, natural light. The glazing is supported by exposed bolted trusses that add an eye-catching feature to the interior of the property.

Feeling closer to nature was important to the owners, so a natural colour palette, recycled wood terrazzo worktops and striking green timber structure were used.

Hemp fibre corrugated cladding and a beautiful meadow planted roof were installed on the exterior, as they will both elegantly alter in colour and texture over time as the house is lived in and enjoyed by the family.

For more information call 020 7459 4626 or visit can-site.co.uk



RICK PUSHINSKY

Straw shortage hits thatch supplies

Years of wet weather have impacted straw production, causing a decline in yields that's affecting suppliers for roofing. There are over 60,000 thatched homes in Britain, many of which are listed and thus restricted in terms of repair or replacement materials. Conservative MP Ben Obese-Jecty raised the problem with housing minister, Matthew Pennycook, who said the issue needed to be considered within the government's general re-working of building policy – but action is yet to be taken.

2,200

is the estimated number of planning officers needed across England and Wales to address the severe shortage. The Planning on Empty report surveyed 134 local planning authorities and found that 80% were operating below full capacity and unable to keep up with the demand for applications, causing a huge delay in decisions. Councils are facing high turnover rates and are having to rely on costly agency workers in an attempt to meet government housing targets.

Lords inquiry shows grey belt policy largely redundant

Peers examining the government's proposal to re-designate land as grey belt areas have suggested that the idea is excessive. The concept of grey belt is poor quality green belt land that could be built on, if it would help councils hit their housing targets. The House of Lords concluded that planning changes, such as mandatory green belt reviews, would shift boundaries anyway, making classification change unnecessary.

What's on?

PLANNING APPROVED?

6th MAR
£40, VIRTUAL

Self build expert Mark Stevenson walks you through key steps forward after gaining planning permission.

buildit.co.uk/training

ELEVATE YOUR GARDEN

15th & 22nd MAR
£105, LONDON

Understand how to enhance your green space with this two-day course.

londonschoolofhorticulture.co.uk

PREPARE & PAINT WORKSHOP

20th – 27th MAR
£170, LONDON

Learn how to achieve a professional looking interior finish with this helpful workshop that spans two mornings.

thegoodlifecentre.co.uk

DESIGN FESTIVAL NORTH

26th MAR
FREE, MANCHESTER

Discover the latest design trends and meet innovative brands and suppliers to inspire your interior fit-out.

designsocialnorth.co.uk

TOOLFAIR

27th -28th MAR
FREE, LONDON

Try before you buy with live demos of the latest tools from leading brands, plus advice from expert manufacturers.

toolfair.info

RENOVATION ADVICE

29th MAR
£165, SWINDON

Planning a home upgrade? Explore your options for improving your home with a selection of experts.

nsbrc.co.uk

New plans to make home buying faster & cheaper

The government has announced that it will modernise the way homes are bought and sold to help bring down current delays of almost five months. A current lack of digitalisation and communication across the sector are to be rectified by the government's scheme to open up key property information, ensuring data can be shared between trusted professionals quicker. Many credentials of a home, such as building control and highways information, are predominantly paper-based or recorded in non-machine-readable formats. The new proposal intends to make it easier and faster for people to get onto the housing ladder, alongside reducing the requirements to share ID in-person, and decrease the number of transactions falling through.

OAKWRIGHTS OPEN DAY

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Take a look around a real-life oak frame build and discuss your plans with the Oakwrights design team.

oakwrights.co.uk

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thebtc.co.uk

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need to know

Can we overcome nutrient neutrality issues?

Nutrient moratoriums began appearing in mid 2019. Natural England advised 74 local authorities that pollution targets were being breached and, because of a European Court decision (The Dutch Nitrogen Judgement), their adopted catchment recovery plans could no longer be relied upon as a way of protecting catchments or enabling housing.

Effectively, local authorities were told they couldn't approve housing developments that might contribute further nutrients (phosphate and nitrogen) unless it could be scientifically and legally proven that there was no additional harm. It transpired that this was almost impossible to do, as even tiny amounts of nutrients from a single self build home were deemed pollution. And so nutrient neutrality, and the market for mitigation credit trading, came into being.

There are many unjust and perplexing aspects of the current predicament for self and custom builders in the affected areas. Perversely, the evidence is now clear that new homes are not the cause of the nutrient surpluses and that preventing delivery of new housing for so long has had severe ecological, economic and human impacts.

In the Lugg catchment, for example, it is estimated that new homes are responsible for less than 0.02% of the overall phosphate load, yet applicants are expected to wait years and pay handsomely just to secure approval. Jobs and businesses have been lost or put at risk, communities have stagnated and housing targets have been missed.

The stress and intolerable pressure the moratorium and mitigation have put on some self build families – who have been embroiled through no fault of their own – is devastating to hear. There is no doubt that nutrient neutrality obligations disproportionately impact smaller projects, especially where mitigation is hard to access. Unlike large developers, self builders can't just walk away and build somewhere else, nor can they suddenly find £10,000s for credits.

There are perhaps some glimmers of change. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act sets out how water companies will be assumed to have reduced their pollution to meet set ecological targets by 2030, which may mean in some regions that mitigation requirements are shorter and therefore cheaper. Other areas are working on grants for septic tank upgrades, whereby the reduction of nutrients from the new system can be traded for new homes.

Border Oak have taken a different approach and we've developed our own mitigation solutions for the Lugg – we are currently awaiting approval of our own nutrient credit bank, where we will store our tradable phosphate reductions to support future self and custom build applications.

However, if officials continue to swerve the need to reduce the primary sources of pollution, we will all be spinning in the spiral of decline. It isn't right that housing is paying for mitigation while the main sources of pollution are free to continue and increase. It will need someone brave to establish a new era for agriculture and water treatment.

MERRY ALBRIGHT is creative director at Border Oak and has been working within the self and custom build market for more than 25 years. She is a member of the Wye Nutrient Management Board and Wye Catchment Partnership, and co chairs the Herefordshire Construction Industry Group. Find out more at **borderoak.com**

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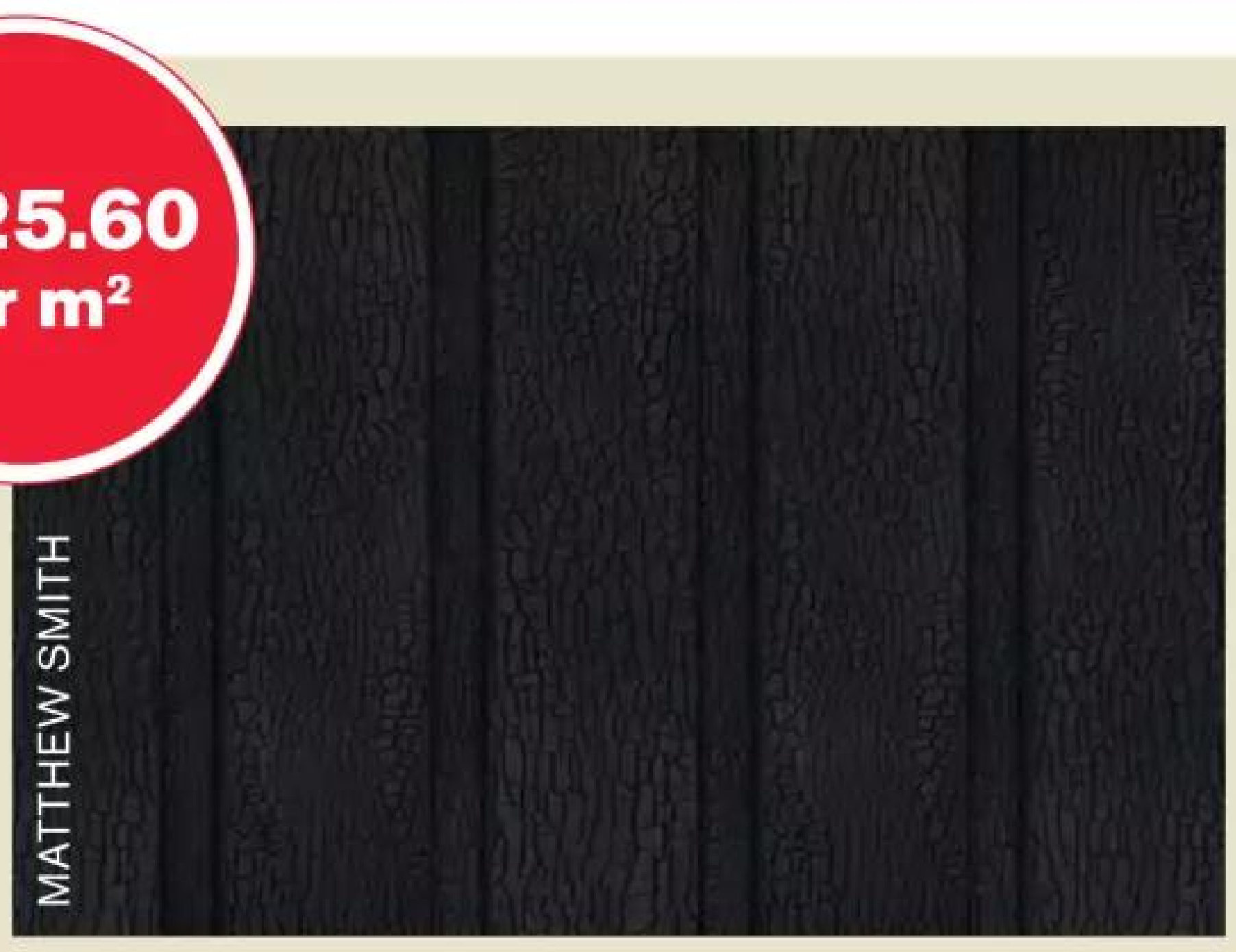
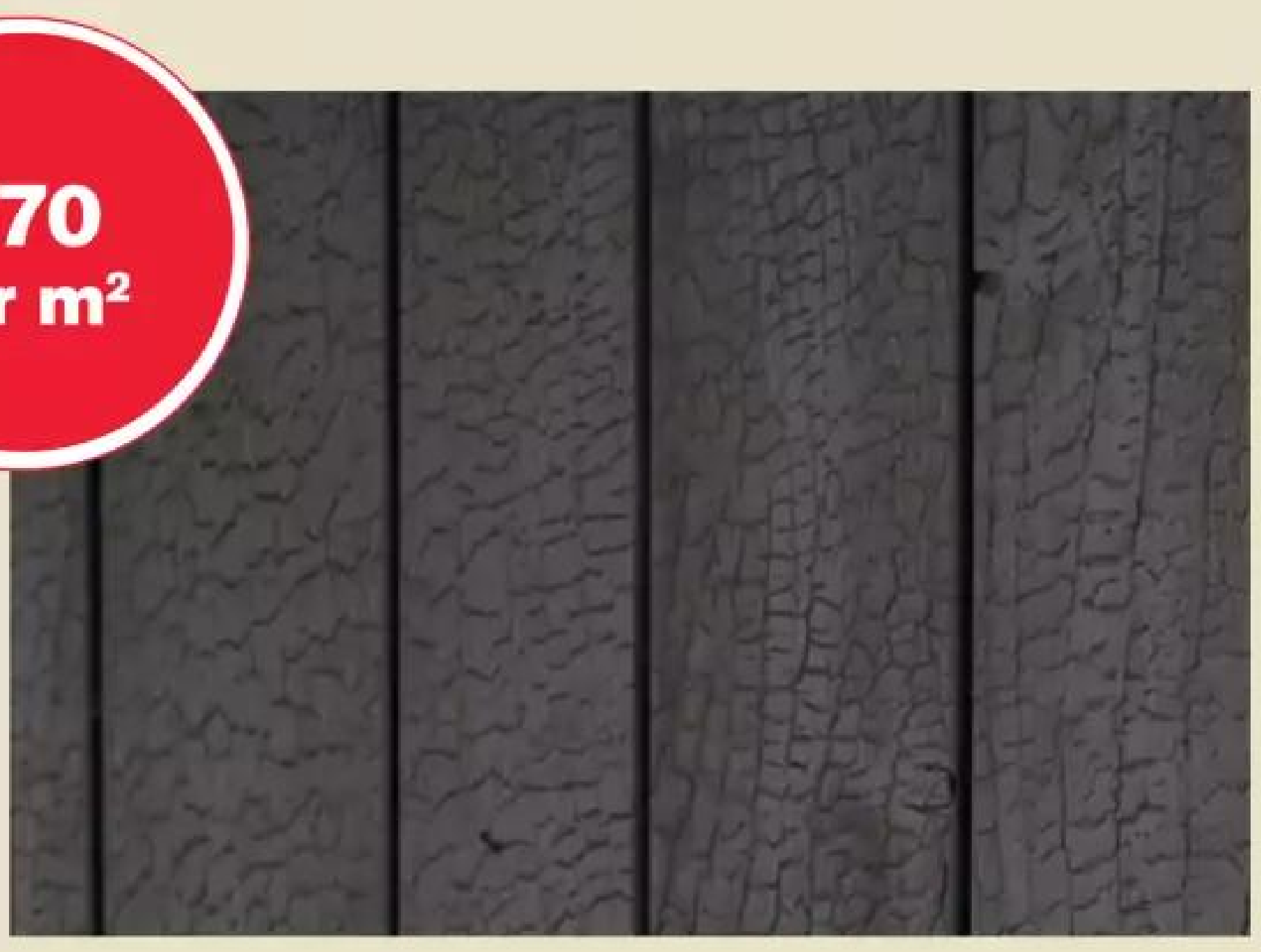

MATTHEW SMITH

This range is manufactured exclusively by the Shou Sugi Ban UK team of skilled craftsmen, who use traditional Japanese techniques to create this charred Accoya timber. This durable cladding will bring a stunning feature to your project. Charred Accoya Shosai cladding, £225.60 per m^2, lathamtimber.co.uk

£70 per m^2



Created from carefully sourced redwood, this cladding features a unique texture that emulates charred timber. The bespoke finish is specially coated to resist chipping or flaking, making it a great choice for both interior and exterior use. Thermowood Mokuzai charred cladding, £70 per m^2, millworks.co.uk

product news

Great shopping ideas for your custom home project

EXTRACTOR FAN

This motorised cooker hood sits flush to the ceiling and can be painted to match your decor, concealing the unit. Lowered via remote control, the extractor offers four different speeds and features dimmable LED lights. **Caple CE930 extractor, £2,582.77, caple.co.uk**

STYLISH HEATING

Designed to warm larger spaces, even on the coldest days, this woodburning stove comes with two flue exits to give you greater flexibility. The stove's clean burn technology ensures that combustible materials are burnt off, preventing the glass from becoming dirty or blackened. **Carron 8kW ECO 2022 stove, £695, renaissanceathome.co.uk**

SMART EV CHARGING

Wondrwall have developed a new all-in-one integrated battery and solar inverter with an EV charger. It allows homeowners to benefit from energy generated from 100% renewable sources. **Wondrwall All-In-One Battery & Inverter System, from £4,194, wondrwall.com**

TRADITONAL FINISH

Recreate the look and style of an original Victorian bathroom with these timeless wall tiles. The new range comes in a variety of classic colours, including green, grey, black, blue and shades of cream. **Thomas Crapper tiles in cool grey, £65 per m^2, thomas-crapper.com**

3 of the best ELECTRIC ROOFLIGHTS

1 *IQ Glass ARES rooflight,* **from £3,800, iqglassuk.com**

2 *EOS Rooflights EOS97,* **from £1,597, eosrooflights.co.uk**

3 *Glazing Vision VisionVent,* **from £3,585, glazingvision.co.uk**

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interiors notebook

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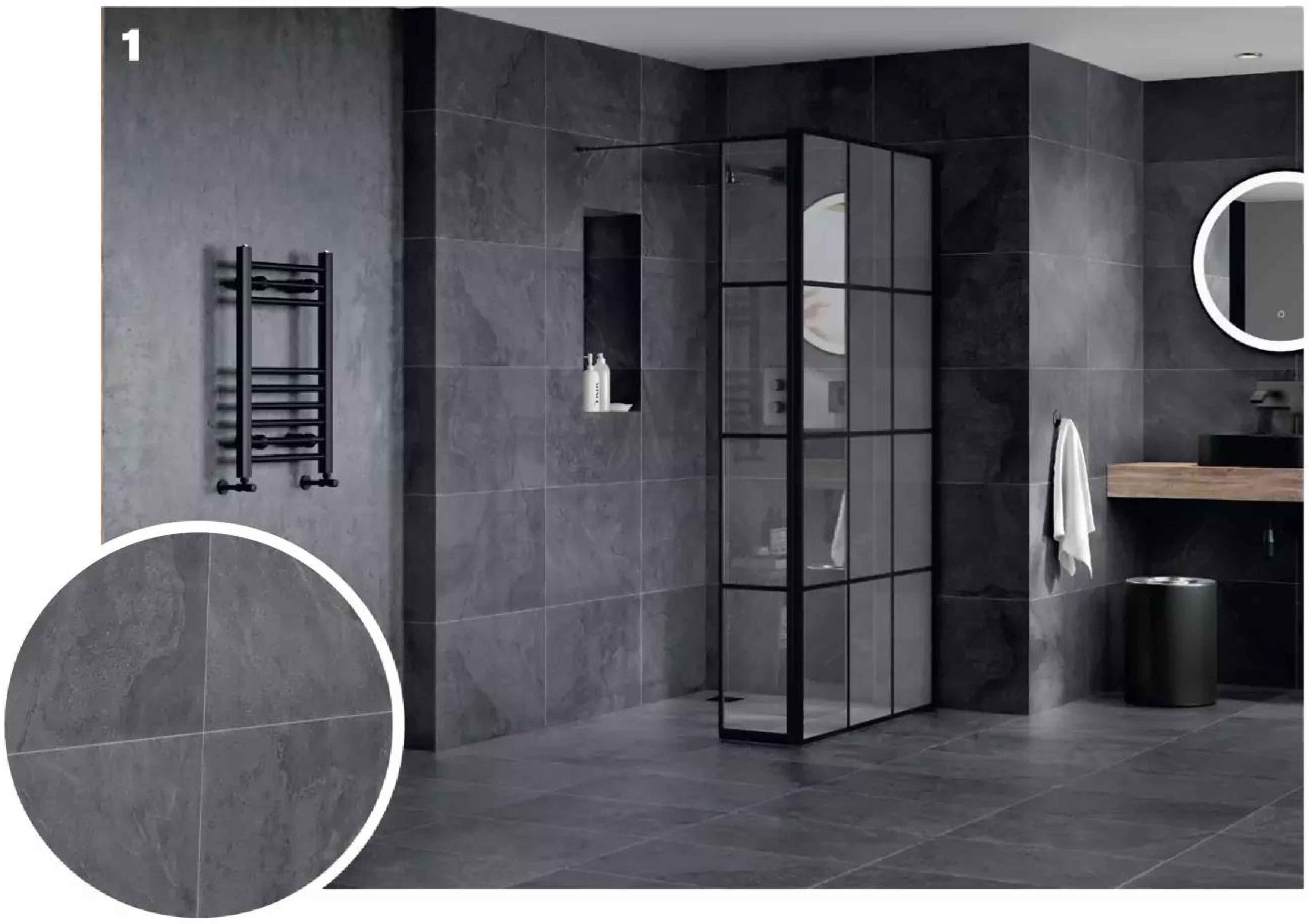

Shopping list

1 *These chic porcelain tiles expertly mimic the natural beauty of slate, with their dark anthracite grey tone and matt finish. The durable construction and the R10 slip resistance rating makes them ideal for use on interior walls and floors.* **Kayrak tiles in anthracite, £17.99 per m², tilemountain.co.uk**

2 *The minimalist design of this pedestal table will add a sleek feature to your interiors. Crafted from stainless steel, it is finished with a smart round glass top and is sure to bring a stunning, contemporary flourish to your house's decorative scheme.* **Bedminster coffee table, £389.99, wayfair.co.uk**

3 *This bold, almost black, charcoal paint is solvent-free, cruelty-free and vegan. Available in a variety of finishes, the colour can be used throughout your home. Its cool shade would work well in a smart drawing room or study.* **Victory colours paint in Dick Turpin, £44.95 per 2.5L, victorycolours.co.uk**

4 *Roper Rhodes's timeless bathroom unit beautifully combines Shaker-style lines with a contemporary, neutral colour palette. The elegant underslung basin units and classic chrome doorknobs add a functional and stylish touch.* **Hampton 1200 vanity unit in slate grey, £1,200, roperrhodes.co.uk**

5 *Originally designed in the 1970s, this timeless, classic chair is handmade in the north of England by an expert team of artisans. The comfy, oversized armchair has a sturdy hardwood frame with luxurious feather-filled cushions.* **The Dylan armchair in velvet charcoal, £2,155, roseandgrey.co.uk**

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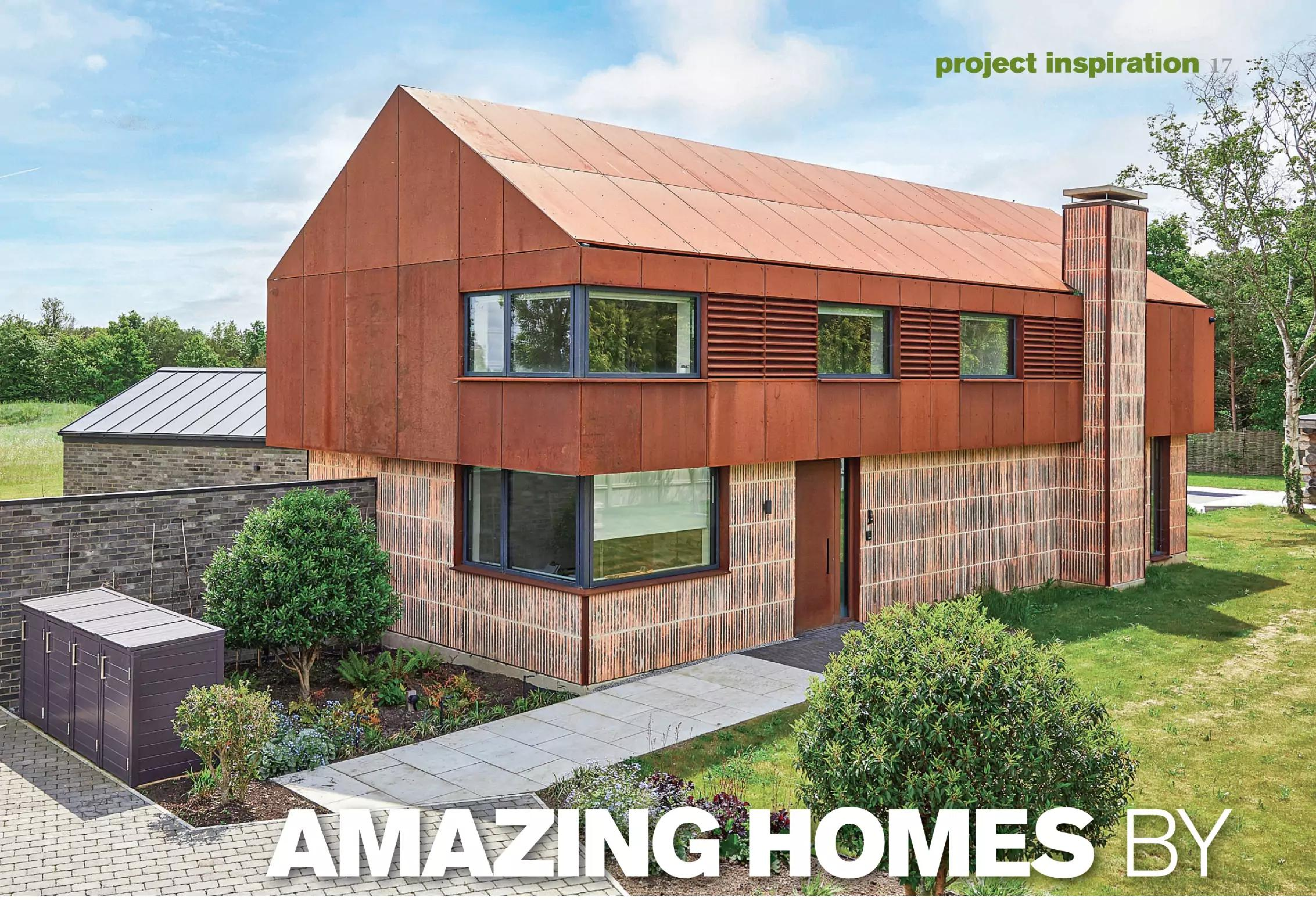


AMAZING HOMES BY ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGISTS

Wondering who can take on the design of your bespoke home build or extension? An architectural technologist could be the perfect solution for you. **Sander Tel** speaks to the experts about what this route involves and shares his top pick of real-life projects

PICTURE PERFECT

Nestled into the Cambridgeshire countryside, this spectacular new home by PiP Architecture has a Y-shaped design to capture and maximise the surrounding views. The exterior comprises low-maintenance materials to create a unified facade that effortlessly beds into the landscape, including vertically-laid handmade bricks, lime mortar, Corten steel cladding and a zinc standing seam roof. **(www.piparchitecture.co.uk)**

MARK WATTS

TEAM EFFORT

A collaboration between architectural designer Pete Tonks and oak frame home specialist, Oakwrights, this fantastic manor house sits beautifully on the Essex/Cambridgeshire border. The design features a brick and render exterior, with face glazing on the double-height entrance, ensuring a light-filled interior and wow-factor first impression. The open-plan home oozes charm, with exposed oak details throughout and ample glazed details, which perfectly balance traditional and modern aesthetics. **(www.oakwrights.co.uk, www.pjtdesign.co.uk)**

EXPERT VIEW ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGIST FAQs

ROB GOULD, director at A & K Architectural Services answers your questions and highlights the benefits of working with a technologist

What is an architectural technologist?

An architectural technologist is a chartered professional who can manage projects from conception to completion. We combine a passion for design with expertise in building science and technology to ensure highly-considered, functional and sustainable solutions. With the ability to work on projects of any scale, we collaborate closely with our fellow construction professionals to deliver high-quality results. Our technical knowledge and collaborative ethos make us essential to the success of modern construction.

What can an architectural technologist do?

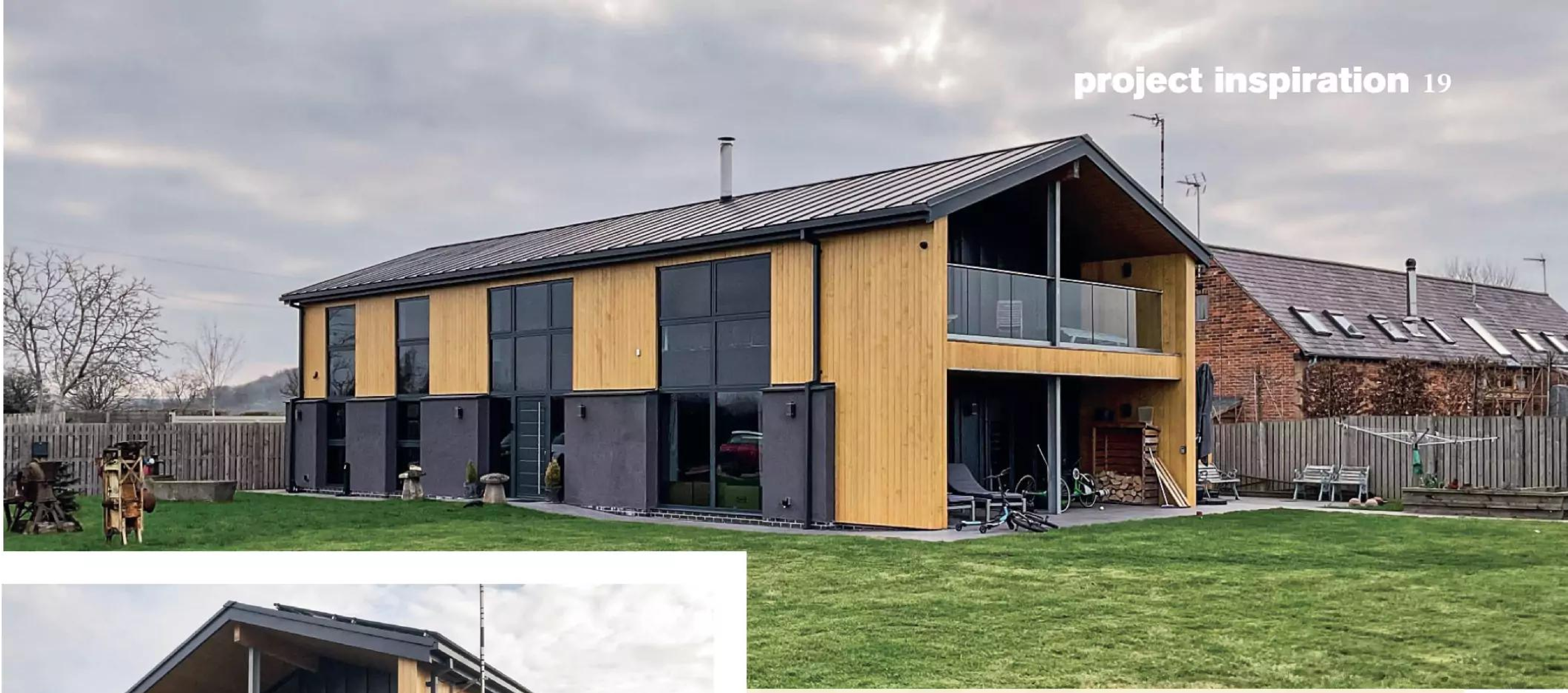
Make things happen! From the initial concept design phase, where functionality takes precedence without compromising on architectural detail, to expertly navigating the complexities of planning permission. We provide detailed drawings and specifications that keep designs compliant with Building Regulations and associated legislation. We liaise with engineers and specialists to ensure projects are technically feasible, cost-effective and sustainable. On site, our technical expertise helps construction run smoothly, ensures conformity and delivers high-quality results.

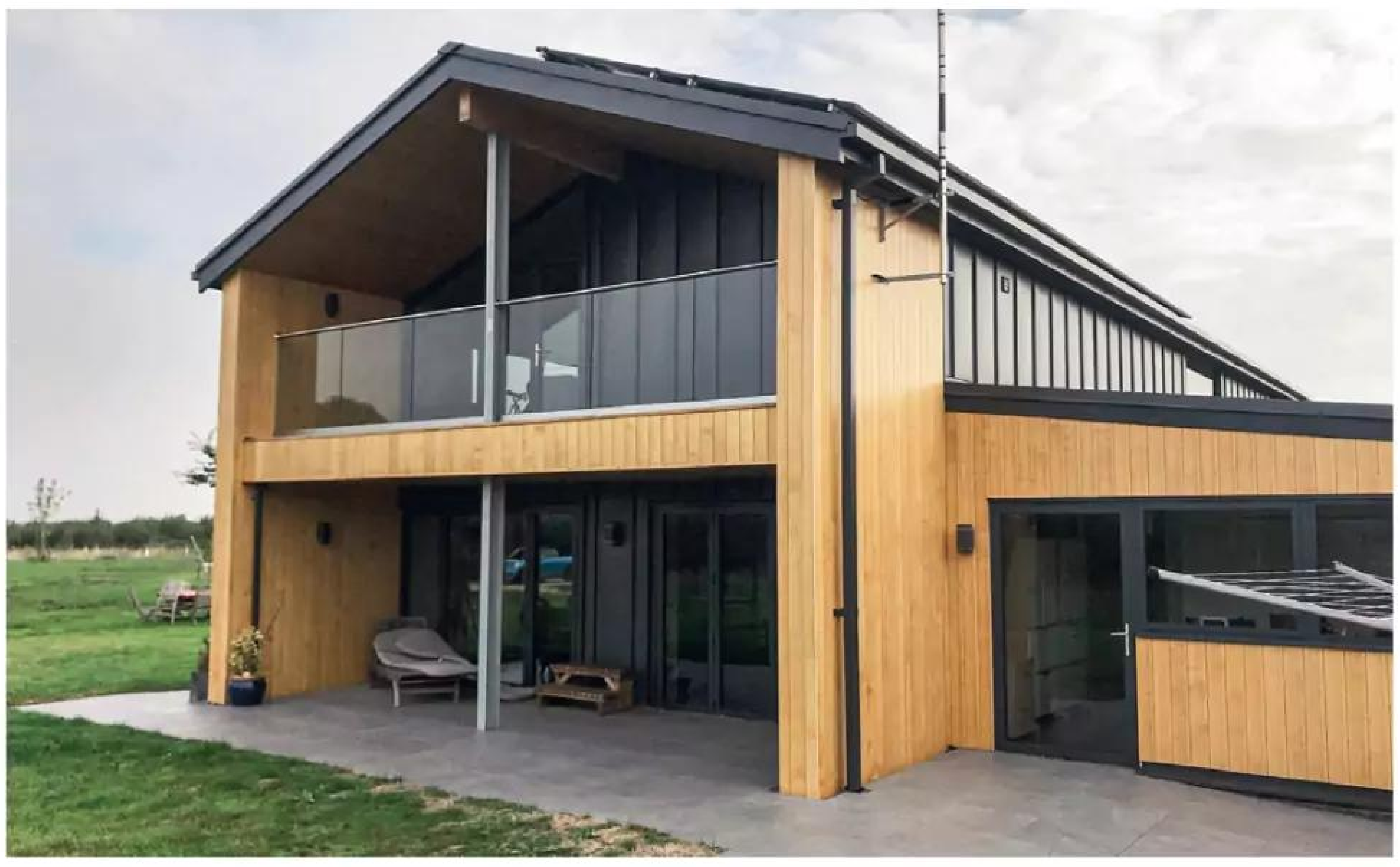
What's the difference between an architect and an architectural technologist?

As the services of both architects and architectural technologists are closely related, distinguishing between them can be tricky. A broad attempt at this differentiation is to say that architects have a greater focus on aesthetic and spatial qualities, whereas architectural technologists tend to prioritise the functional and technical aspects of development. Both are fully qualified, capable architectural professionals.

Can an architect and architectural technologist work together on a scheme?

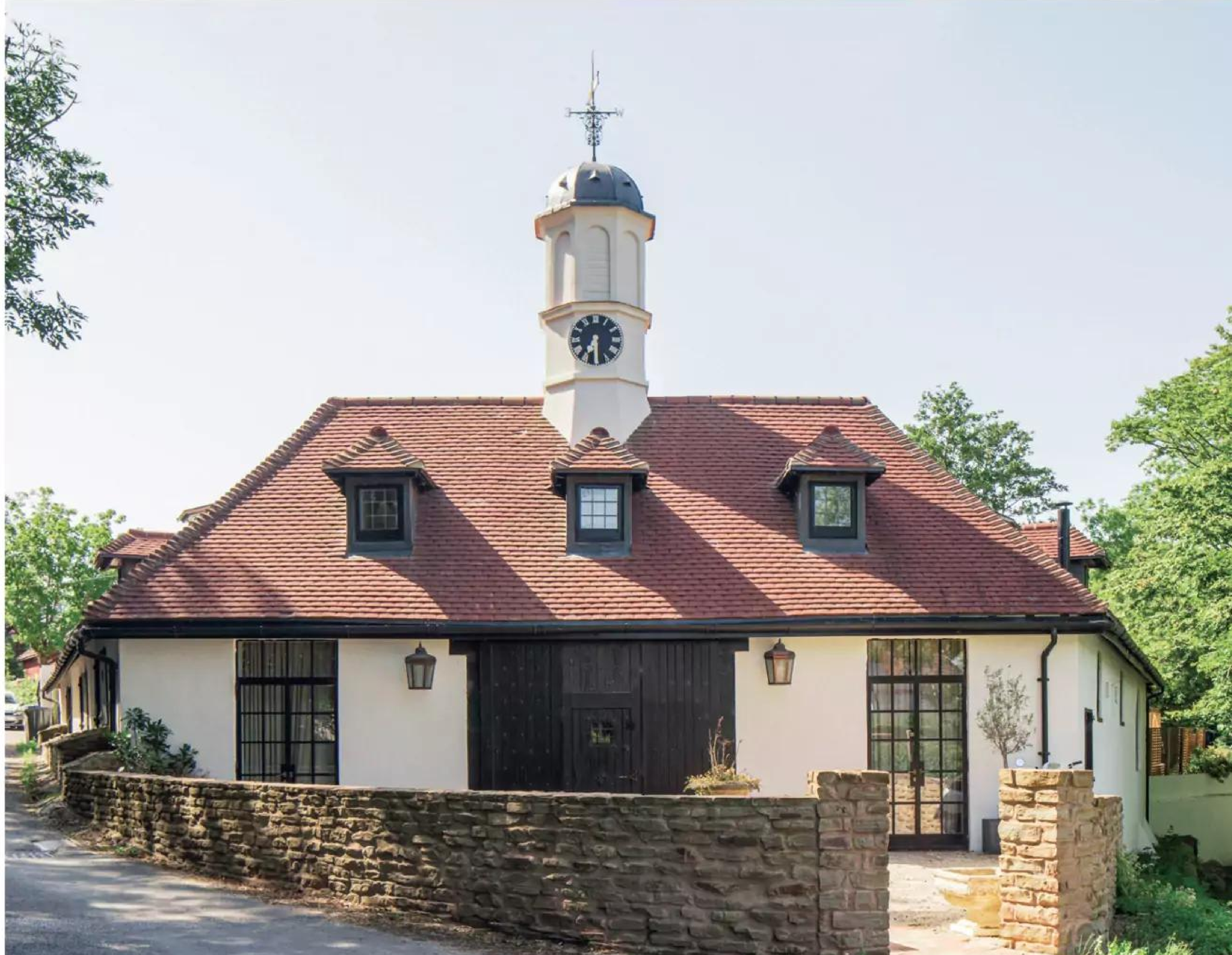
Absolutely! Collaboration is at the heart of our work as architectural technologists, and the sharing of skills and knowledge ensures the continued development of our profession. It's a good idea to speak to different industry experts about any specific project goals so you can find the right fit and service.





LIKE FOR LIKE

Archiwildish carefully navigated rural planning permissions to demolish an existing brick barn in the Warwickshire countryside and rebuild a sympathetic brand new home in its place. The dwelling was created with discreet, bespoke features that cater to the disabled owner's needs. A blend of timber and dark grey render, with large spans of glazing, characterises the exterior design to create a home that would satisfy planning stipulations. **(www.archiwildish.co.uk)**

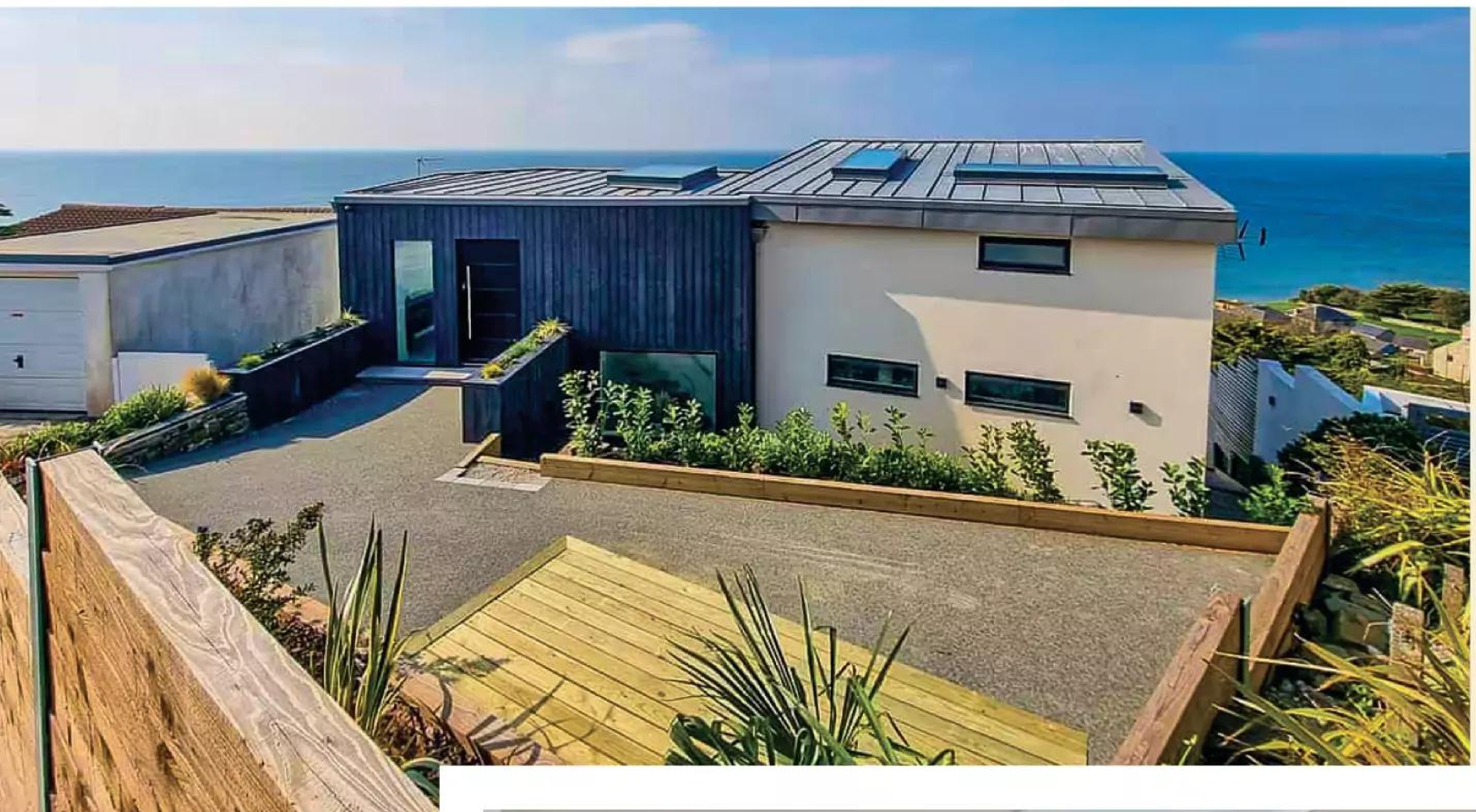


MAKING HISTORY

Life Size Architecture, a Brighton-based team of architectural designers and technologists, won the 2023 Build It Award for Best Architect or Designer for a Renovation or Conversion Project with their sensitive restoration scheme, The Gate House. Set in the South Downs National Park and constructed in a distinctive late -Arts & Crafts mode, the home is a historically significant asset. Life Size Architecture revived the structural timbers and added new glazed elements, alongside a sympathetic rear extension, to maximise light and views. **(www.lifesizearchitecture.co.uk)**

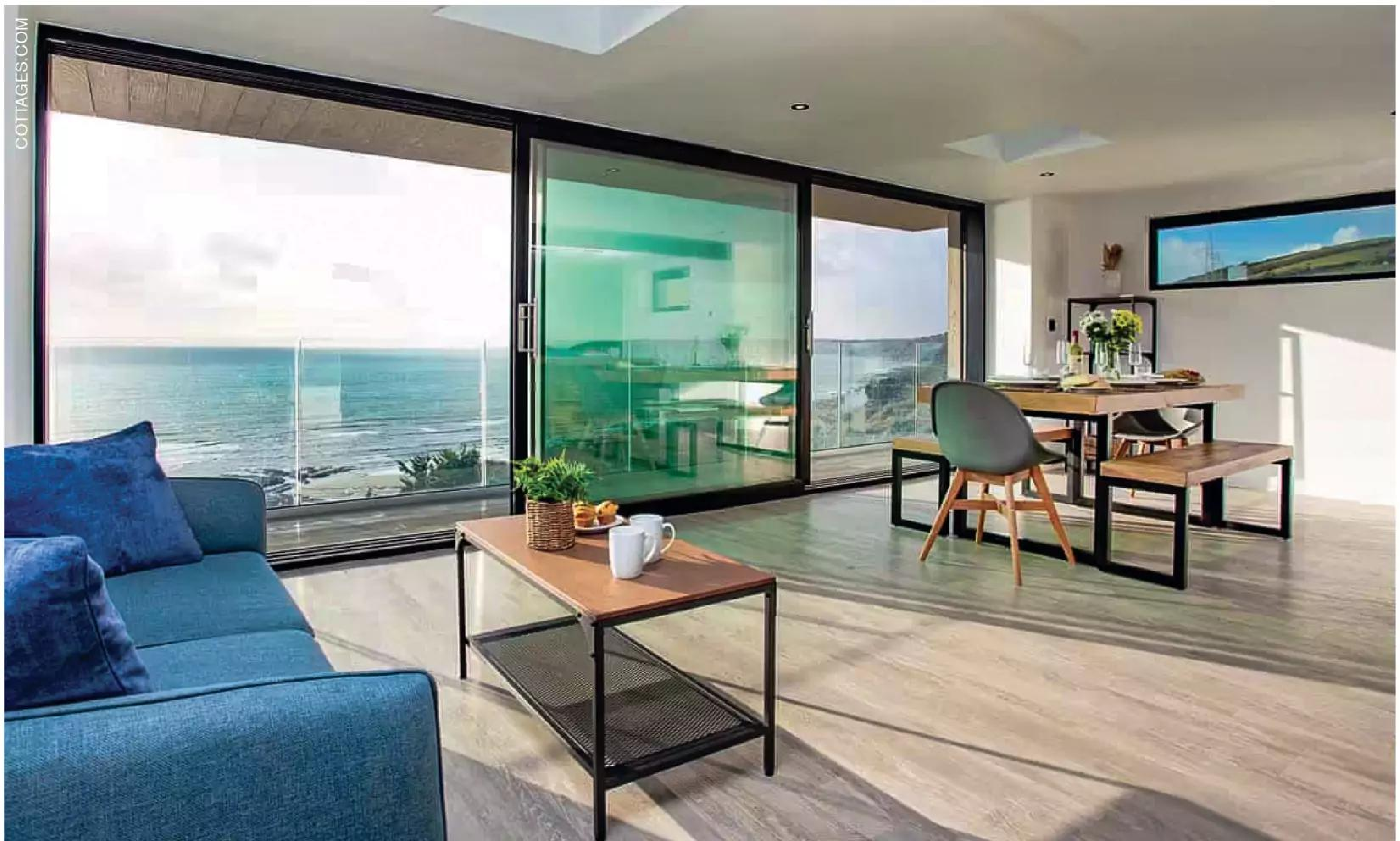
CONTEMPORARY SOLUTION

Western Building Consultants is behind the design of this modern extension to a family home in a green belt location. The team made use of permitted development (PD) rights, creating a scheme with a raised roofline and celestial rooflights that flood the interior with natural light and ensure a sense of openness. Expansive glazing and natural materials ensure a seamless indoor-outdoor connection, enhancing both aesthetics and sustainability. **(www.westernbuildingconsultants.com)**



A WELCOME CHANGE

A & K Architectural Services completed this whole-house refurbishment and extension to a tired property perched on a hillside plot in southwest Cornwall. The project involved a comprehensive transformation, with the addition of a new basement zone and remodel of the ground and first floors. The external render has been refreshed, while old, outdated hanging tiles were replaced with sleek black timber cladding. The weathered felt roof was upgraded to a durable zinc covering, too. **(www.akarchitecturalservices.co.uk)**



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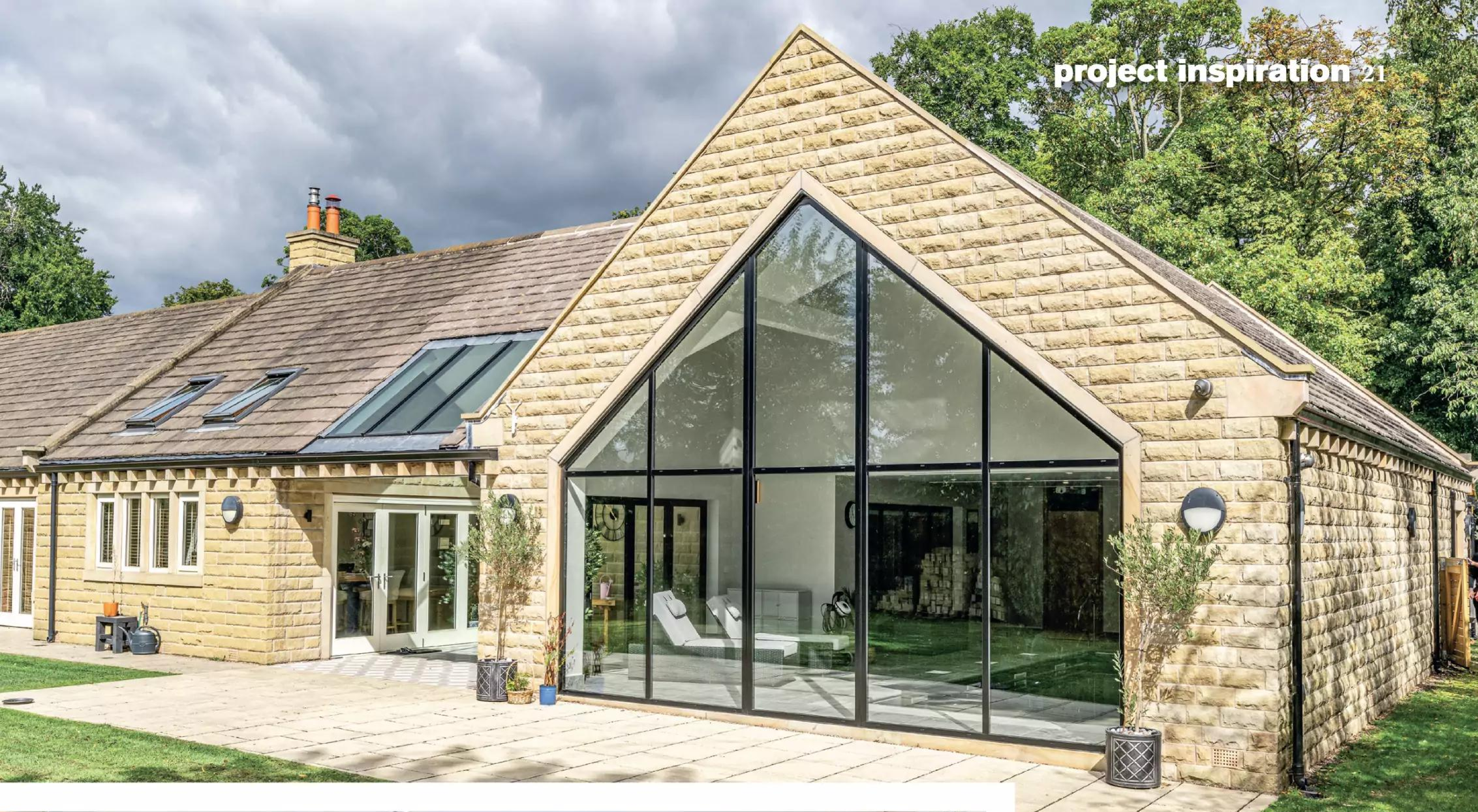
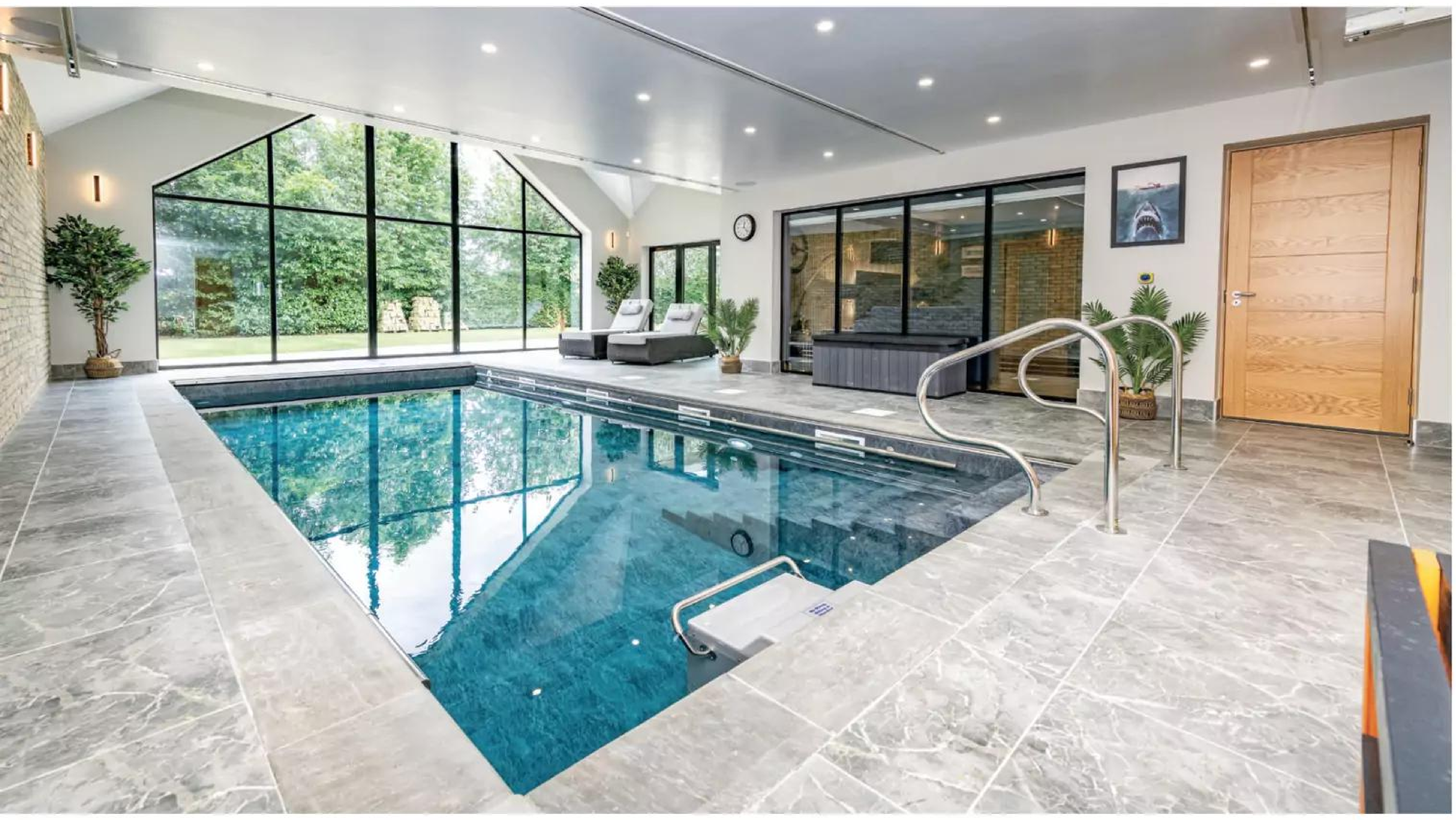




SMART LIVING

France+Associates reimagined this family home in Wakefield with a bespoke addition, tailoring the property to meet the needs of a young adult with cerebral palsy. The single-storey side extension hosts a hydrotherapy pool and accessible home office, with a striking glazed gable allowing light to flood the swimming area. Home automation systems, including security, automatic doors, blinds and lighting, work together to enable the family to operate independently. **(www.franceandassociates.co.uk)**

EXPERT VIEW WHAT DOES THE DESIGN & BUILD PROCESS LOOK LIKE?

PETE TONKS, from PJT Design, explains how the design and build phases might progress with an architectural technologist

What does the initial design process involve?

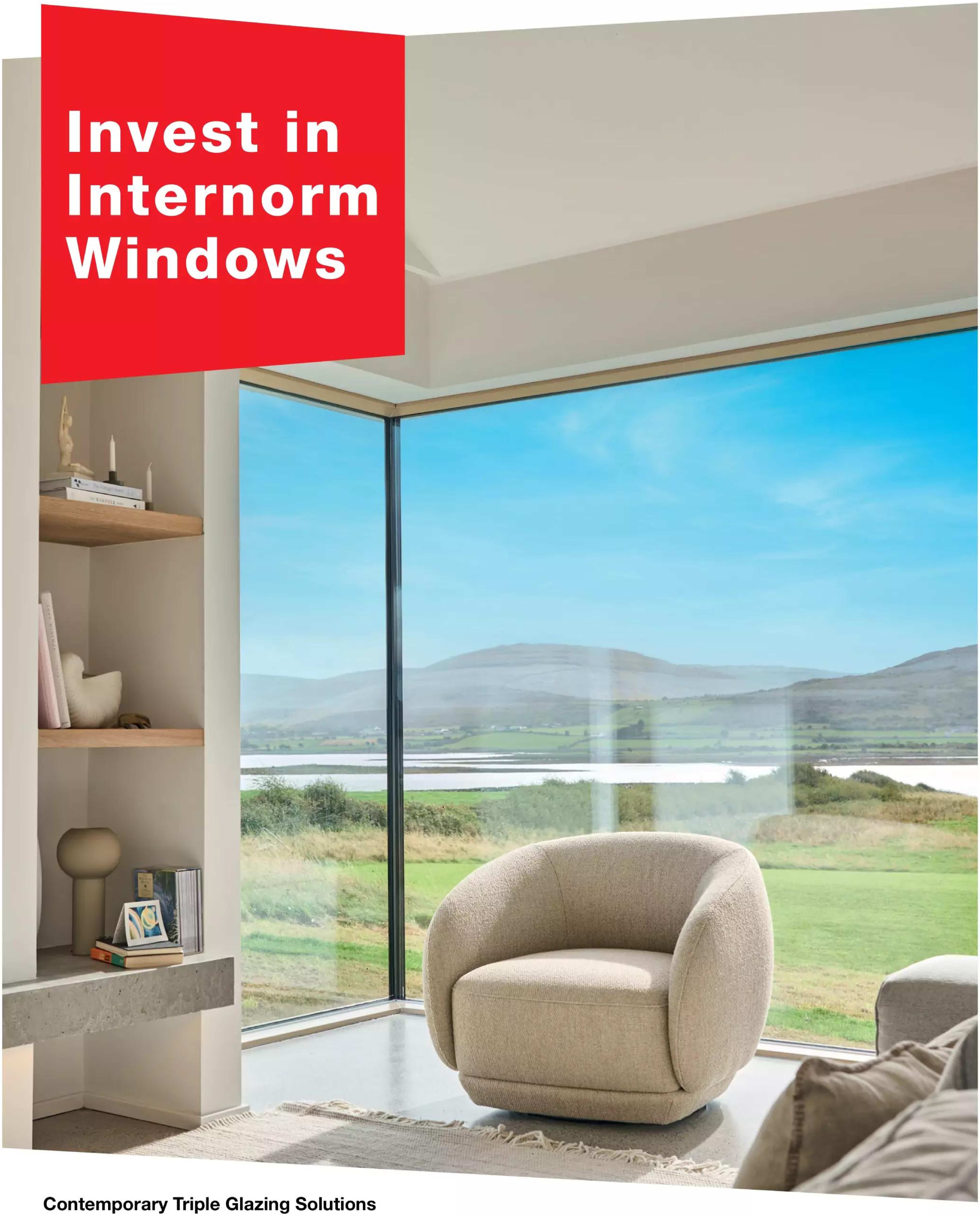
For me, the design stage is instinctive and intuitive. I have been creating bespoke homes for four decades now, so I almost have a sixth sense when it comes to reading my clients. Each homeowner is unique and the design process around them has to be equally so. I love the thrill of a blank sheet of paper and the journey of exploring my clients' dreams and aspirations that led them to build their own home in the first place. Good house design is all about capturing every single element of the brief. Then you can create a scheme with positive flow and the most appropriate architecture, while simultaneously navigating both local and national planning policy.

How much collaboration do you have with other designers?

My architectural design process is very personal – it's just me. This is how I work best and it helps my creativity. However, I still surround myself with a tried and trusted network of partner designers and consultants. They assist me in different areas, such as engineering, Building Regs, landscape design, biodiversity design etc. I work collaboratively with all of the designers at oak frame specialist, Oakwrights, and we help each other. As the business has grown, so has my network.

How much involvement do you have in the build process?

Of the 20 or so houses a year that I design, I am also lucky enough to get to build a couple of them. This is through PJT Custom Build, a project management company I founded with my brother in 2015. If we are doing the full project management then we are involved in every single decision with the client, from groundworks to turning the key in the front door. If I'm just doing design and planning for a client, then at that stage I will typically hand over to them or their appointed builder/project manager.



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24 **SWAN SONG**

With experience already under their belts, Andrew Laing and partner June Russell decided to take on another project. The result is an impressive timber frame home in the heart of Edinburgh

32 **CONSERVATION INSPIRATION**

Landscape architect Ian Turkington successfully designed and built a nature-inspired paradise within the urban landscape of East London

40 **GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY**

After navigating a tricky planning process, Tracy Gorden self built this bright, contemporary house with a spacious living area and stylish mezzanine bedroom

MORE ONLINE ››

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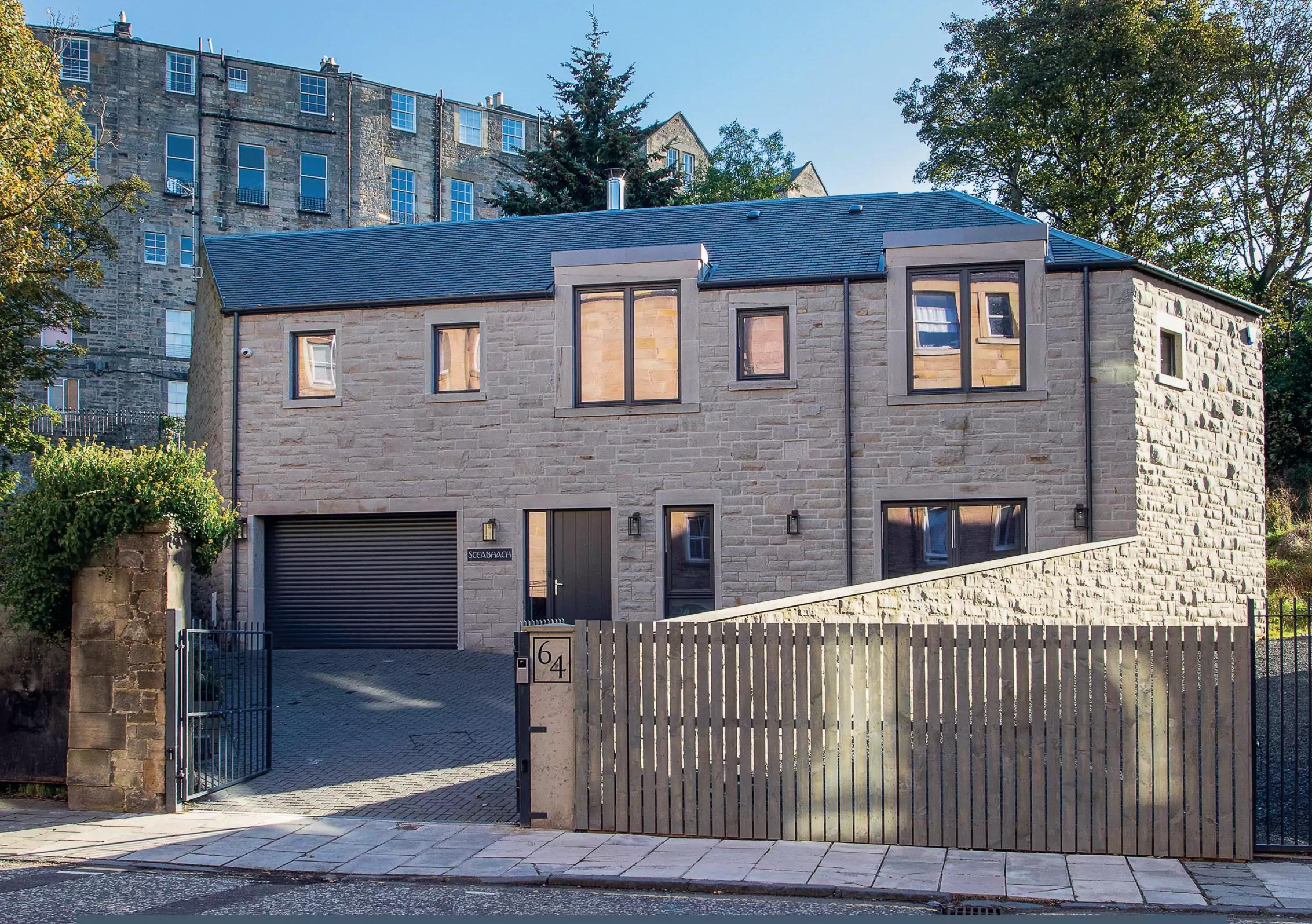
SWAN **SONG**

After securing a backland plot in the heart of Edinburgh, experienced self builders **Andrew Laing and June Russell** took on their final project

WORDS **JENNIFER GRIMBLE** PHOTOS **DOUGLAS GIBB**



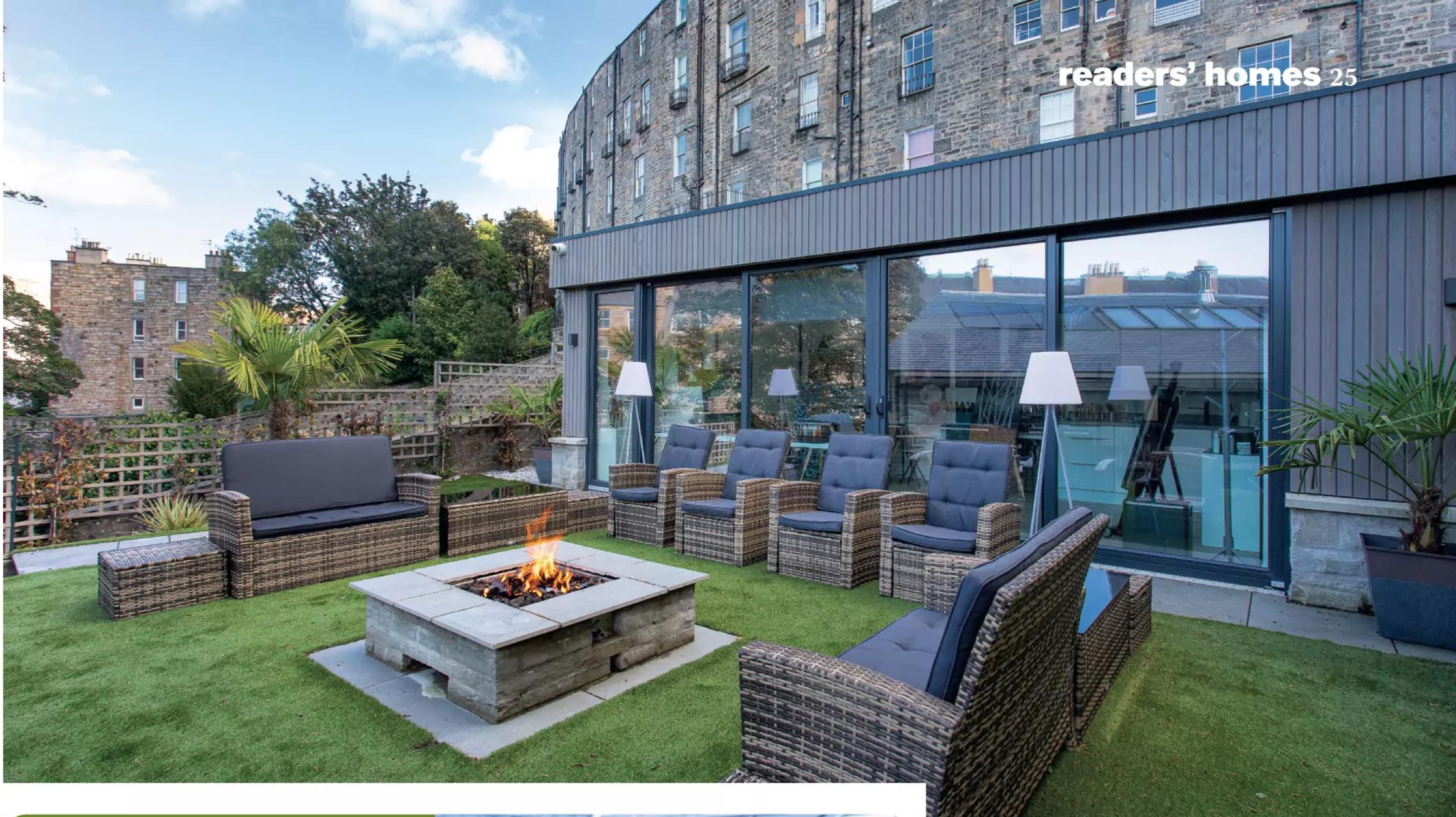
You could call Andrew Laing and June Russell veteran self builders. The couple, a retired police officer and bridal boutique owner, previously dabbled in development and have completed a number of self build and renovation projects over the years. But in 2020, it was time for them to tackle their final scheme. “This was our swan song,” says Andrew. “We wanted to build the perfect home for our retirement.”

As seasoned self builders, the couple weren’t afraid to take on a real challenge, and that’s exactly what they did when they bought their chosen plot. Located in Edinburgh’s New Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the backland site sits amongst charming Georgian townhouses and elegant squares. “We knew the area, as it had been on Andrew’s first beat when he was a police constable back in the ‘80s,” says June. At 600m^2, the land is located behind a grade A listed crescent and had once been the garden and grounds of a grand residence. More recently, it was used as a car park before being hived off for development.

Over the years, three planning applications for building on the site had been submitted and rejected, so the couple certainly took a gamble when they bought it in March 2020. “There had been huge community objection to the previous planning applications,” says Andrew. “So, we knew we would need to work hard to build good relationships with our neighbours and design something that would enhance the local area. Buying without planning permission was risky, but it certainly paid off in the end.”

Self design

Taking a hands-on approach, Andrew and June designed the home themselves, opting to blend a traditional aesthetic with modern eco credentials. “We wanted the property to be big enough to



FACT FILE

NAMES Andrew Laing & June Russell

OCCUPATIONS Retired police constable & retired bridal shop owner

LOCATION Edinburgh

TYPE OF PROJECT Self build

PROJECT ROUTE Architect-designed, homeowners project managed

BOUGHT March 2020

LAND COST £151,000

HOUSE SIZE 260m² (garden studio 32m²)

PLOT SIZE 600m²

PROJECT COST £840,533

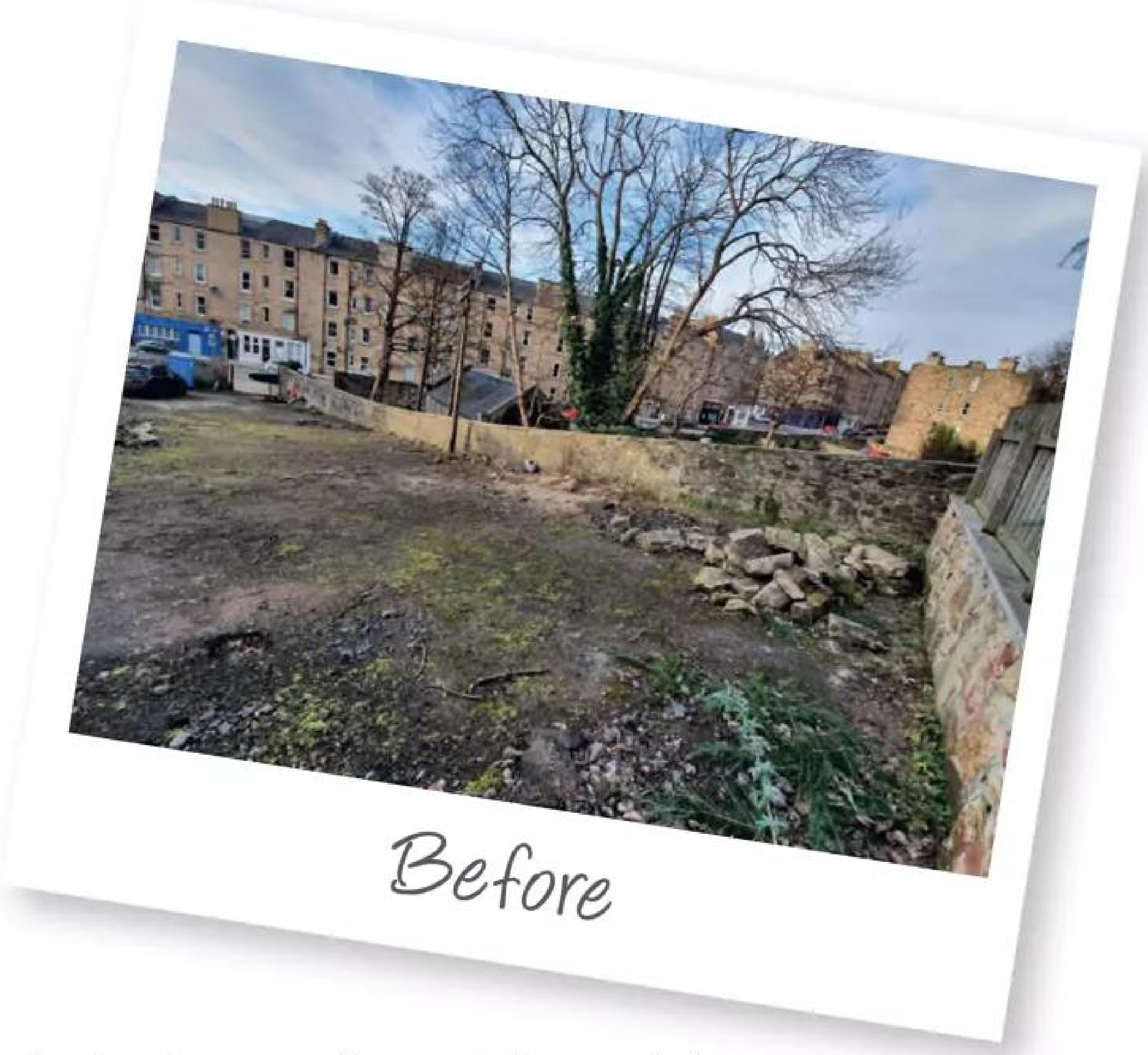
PROJECT COST PER M² £2,879

VAT RECLAIMED £62,000

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED March 2021

BUILDING WORK TOOK Nine months

Left & above: Constructed from timber frame, Andrew and June's home is dressed in traditional Elswick Grey Split Tumbled stone from a quarry in Durham – a close match to the sandstone bricks used across much of Edinburgh's New Town. At the rear, the house is far more modern, with extensive sliding glazed doors from NorDan connecting the interior with the multi-level garden. Sections of stone are complemented by striking Siberian Larch cladding from Russwood



accommodate our sociable lifestyle, which often centres round hosting friends from South Africa," says Andrew. "It was important that the home was sympathetic to the adjacent tenement buildings that date back to early 1800s, too. We were determined to put a huge amount of work, plus all the learnings from our previous self builds, into the design, how the house flowed and the features we wanted to incorporate, both inside and out."

The final design was for a grand, mews-style home, clad in traditional stone – helping the building to blend in with the many Georgian structures in the area. Sadly, the local Craigleith Quarry, which provided the sandstone for much of Edinburgh's New Town had closed, but the couple managed to source a very close match – Elswick Grey Split Tumbled – from Dunhouse Quarry in Durham.

Designed to sit neatly on the unusually shaped lot, the home is a rhombus with perpendicular walls. Internally, the couple opted for a flipped floorplan, with the bedrooms downstairs and the living spaces above. "This gave us eye-level views of the garden from the upper floor and created a continuum from the living area, through the balcony to the garden," says Andrew. "It also means that each of the bedrooms stays cooler during the summer months, despite a south facing rear elevation that's mostly glass."

For the build system, the couple chose timber frame, with a stone outer leaf cavity wall construction. "We'd worked with timber frame before and loved the speed of construction," says June . "Our supplier's kit comes pre-insulated and are highly energy efficient, too." Sections of Siberian larch cladding and a slate roof finish the exterior.

Once the design was set, the couple hired Zone Architects and Elliott & Company Consulting Engineers to work with their timber frame provider on the technical side. Despite the land's history of planning rejections, Andrew and June's sensitive design, and their

The living areas are located on the second floor, allowing for idyllic views of the back garden. The open-plan space benefits from a lounge, dining zone, snug and a generous kitchen by Benchmarx

approach with people in the surrounding neighbourhood, helped them obtain consent first time around. "The architectural drawings were submitted to local planners and permission was secured under delegated authority in November 2020," says June.

Build hurdles

Andrew and June project managed, hiring their contractors individually. "We were full time on the build; on site seven days a week and in the evenings. We did all of the admin, too" says Andrew. "Being present on site helped hugely, as we could see where slippages were likely to arise, allowing us to respond quickly."

Work began on site in March 2021 and challenges revealed themselves almost immediately. "Our land survey discovered a main sewer running through the plot," says June. "Scottish Water weren't aware of it and we were forced to have it redirected at a cost of £35,000." Next, A J McPherson arrived to complete the groundworks. "We wrongly believed that the area would be suitable for standard strip foundations," June continues. "It turned out the ground conditions were awful and that's probably why, shortly after work had begun, the builders left our plot as a gap site."

The couple later discovered that the area had once been known as Sandy Brae, due to the underlying conditions of the ground. "Our site investigations found rock over six metres down," says Andrew. "We had to install 32m by 6m piles to support the slab that the house sits on. Fortunately, we had a decent provision for contingencies to cover the £32,000 that it cost for the piling work."

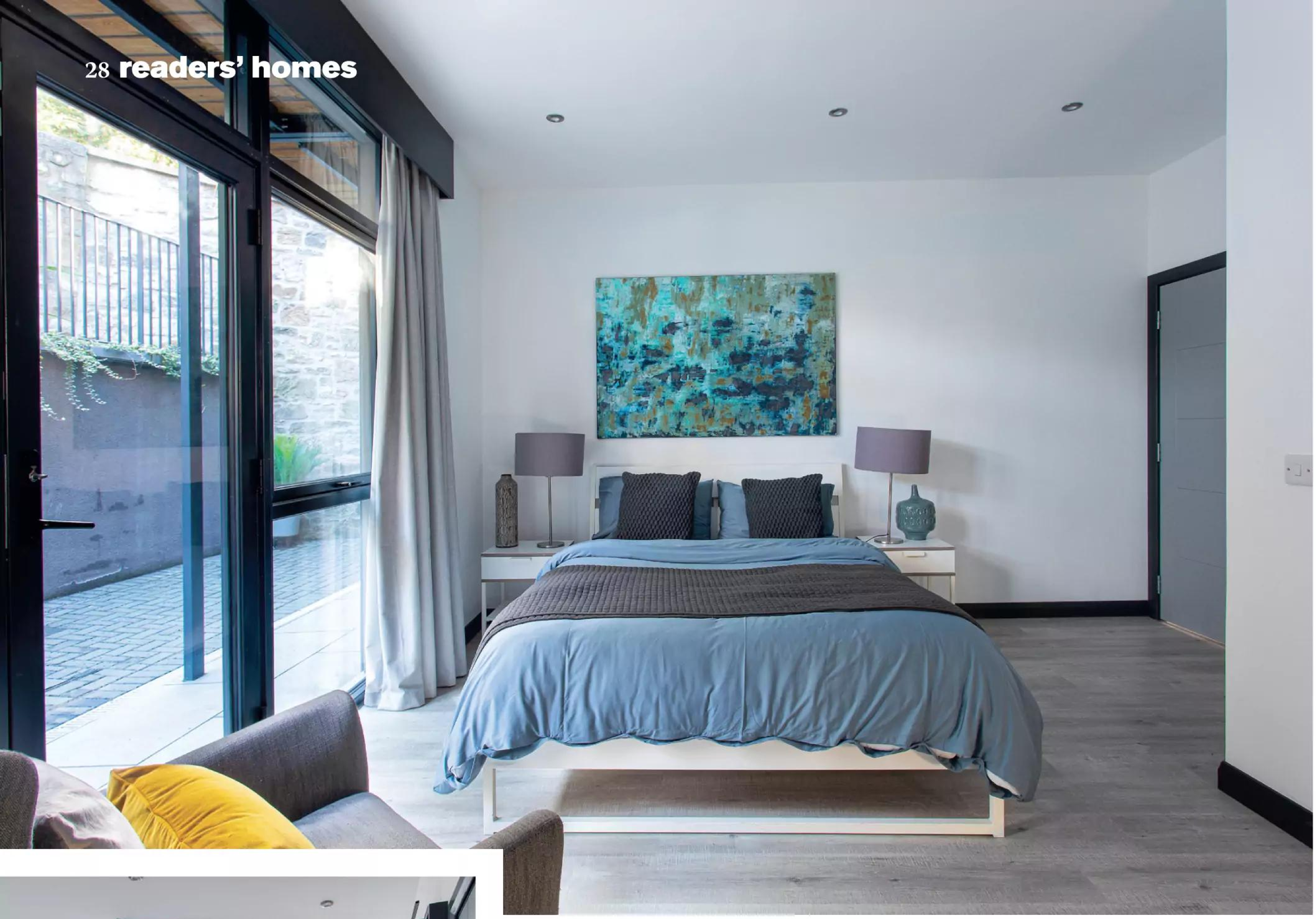
The interiors are sleek and contemporary, with carefully considered pops of colour, texture and pattern throughout

The groundworks were completed by spring 2021 and in July, the timber frame arrived. The kit was assembled in just six days, but it almost didn't happen. "We signed a sales agreement with the supplier in October 2020 and they were scheduled to deliver in March the following year," Andrew says. "In late January, I contacted them to confirm delivery, but they had no record of the contract. The sales person had left and failed to process the order. This meant fabrication of our house shell hadn't been arranged."

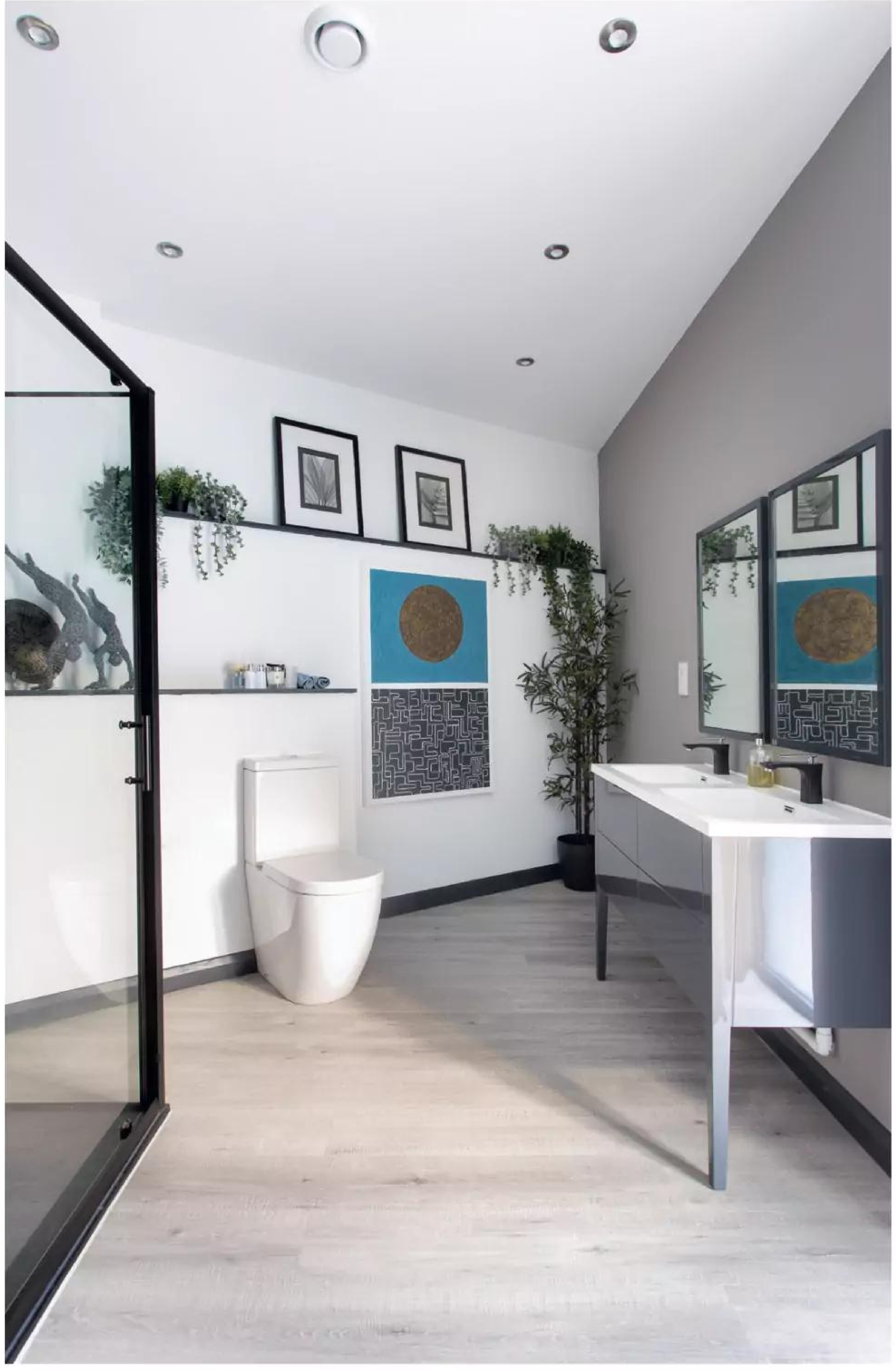
Andrew and June were forced to accommodate a later delivery date. However, around April, the supplier increased the price of the kit by £21,000. "Of course, we contested the hike since we were not at fault," says June. "Later, several key delivery dates were subsequently missed too, resulting in significant additional rework for us. For example, they failed to place the order with the window supplier, meaning the glazing didn't arrive alongside the kit as scheduled in early August. The units were eventually delivered in late September and we had to rehire a crane and crew to retrofit the windows."

In the interim, Andrew and June had to absorb the cost of installing frames and timber sheeting to make the house wind and watertight, and to allow the internal works to commence. "Almost the entire rear elevation is glass, so this was a huge undertaking and financial investment," says Andrew. Once the frame was finished, the exterior was ready to be clad. "We had issues with the stone supplier, and because of the unusual shape of each piece, the mason's work took almost a full year," he continues. "Luckily, this delay had minimal impact, other than the cost of retaining the scaffolding."

When the structure was completed, Andrew and June tackled the mainstay of the internal works themselves, including the electrics, plumbing, central heating, fit-out and interior design. Despite all the issues they faced, the most difficult part for the couple was co-ordinating with their architect and engineer. "The relationship



Right: The main bathroom is easy to maintain, thanks to its tile-free design. It boasts a dual vanity, a large walk-in shower and easy to clean shower panels by Victoria Plum



between the two professionals wasn't as strong as we'd first thought," says June. "So, Andrew was forced to spend an inordinate amount of time trying to resolve design and engineering issues."

Last hurrah

The pair moved into their new home in early December 2021. A modern take on Edinburgh's heritage architecture, the property looks like it has been there for decades, yet benefits from plenty of contemporary touches, including traditional timber windows and a high-spec front door. With a flipped floorplan, the ground floor is home to a garage, entryway, four bedrooms (three of them ensuite) and a gym – making it perfect for hosting guests.

The first floor houses the main living spaces, including an open-plan lounge, dining area and kitchen, nestled under a generous pitched roof. Connected to a full-width veranda, this level has easy access to the back garden. A cosy family space, study and shower room complete the second storey. June is responsible for the home's bold

Far left & left: Two of the home's four bedrooms are connected to exterior courtyards via French doors. With glossy timber floors, white-washed walls and bold artwork, the bedrooms are stylish and inviting

Below: At 32m², the garden studio is the perfect spot for June to retreat to when she wants to work on her art. The self-contained space comes with a kitchenette and shower room and is finished with Siberian Larch cladding, plus a sedum roof by Optigreen

WE LEARNED...

BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT from the house; how you'd like it to flow and what features you require. Your architect might try to change your mind, so be confident in which changes you're willing to accept and stick to your guns on those must-haves.

GET SUFFICIENT TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE or support. It's too easy to simply accept technical specifications without question, but don't be scared to challenge things that don't feel right and, if you don't have the expertise, get a second opinion.

ALWAYS HAVE A REALISTIC CONTINGENCY FUND. You can be fairly sure that issues you haven't predicted will arise. So, add a decent buffer to your budget from the beginning and get into the mindset that it's part of the spend.

and beautiful interior design. Statement pieces, including a double-sided circular fireplace, vibrant furnishings, bold artworks and oversized light fixtures add to the home's modern finish.

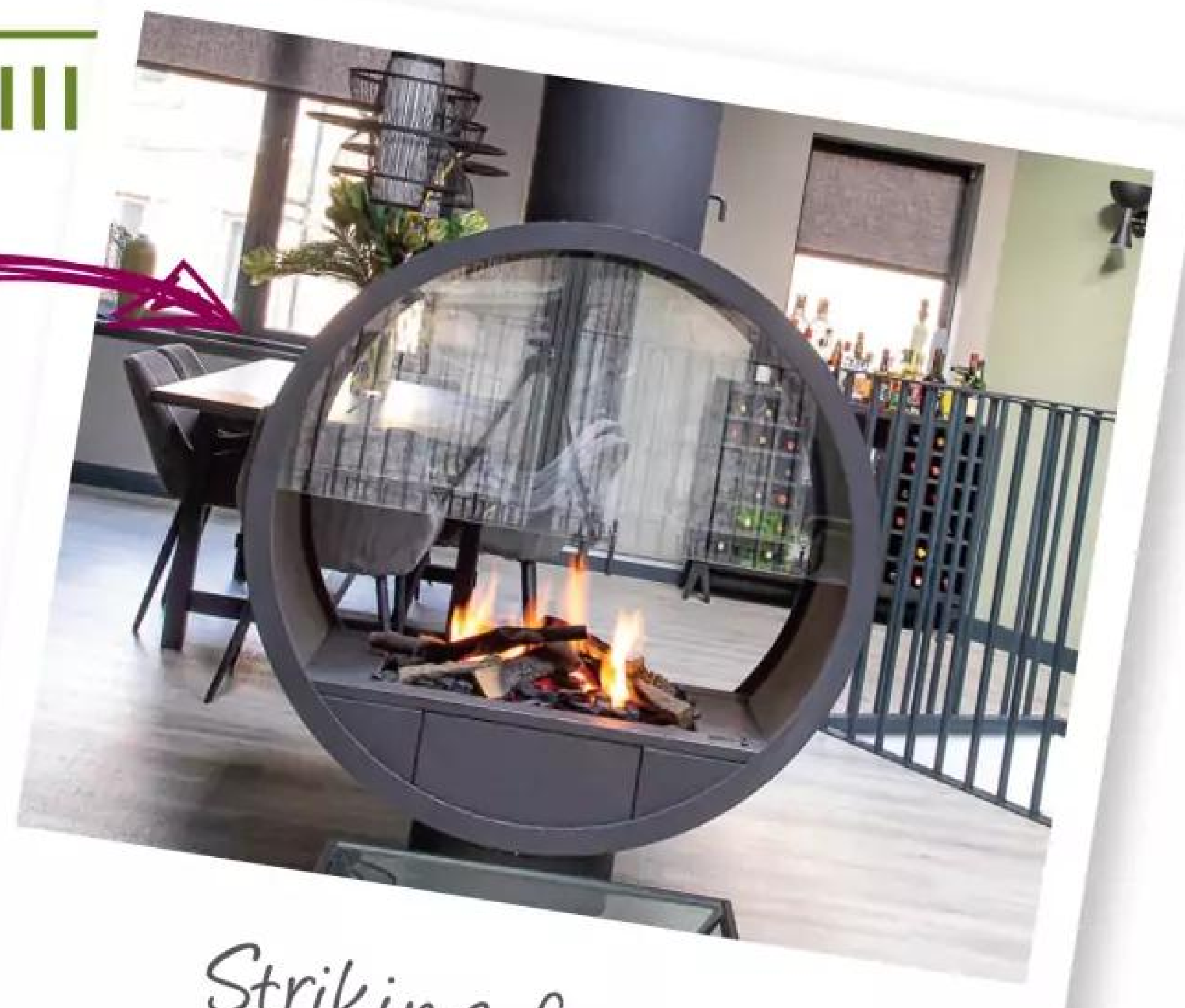
Thanks to the timber frame kit, plus pre-installed insulation, solar panels and MVHR system, the house was close to achieving Passivhaus airtightness. "The only aspect that stopped this was the flue and air feed system for the fire," says June.

Despite all the hurdles, the pair took great pleasure in creating their final self build home. "We received lots of plaudits from neighbours and the community for our approach to the build." After some time living in the property, Andrew and June realised that when they didn't have visitors, the property was too big for just the two of them. With heavy hearts, they sold in early 2024. "We never saw that coming," says Andrew. "But we've moved into something more appropriate – a penthouse flat with views of Edinburgh's skyline."

closer look

Double-sided fireplace...

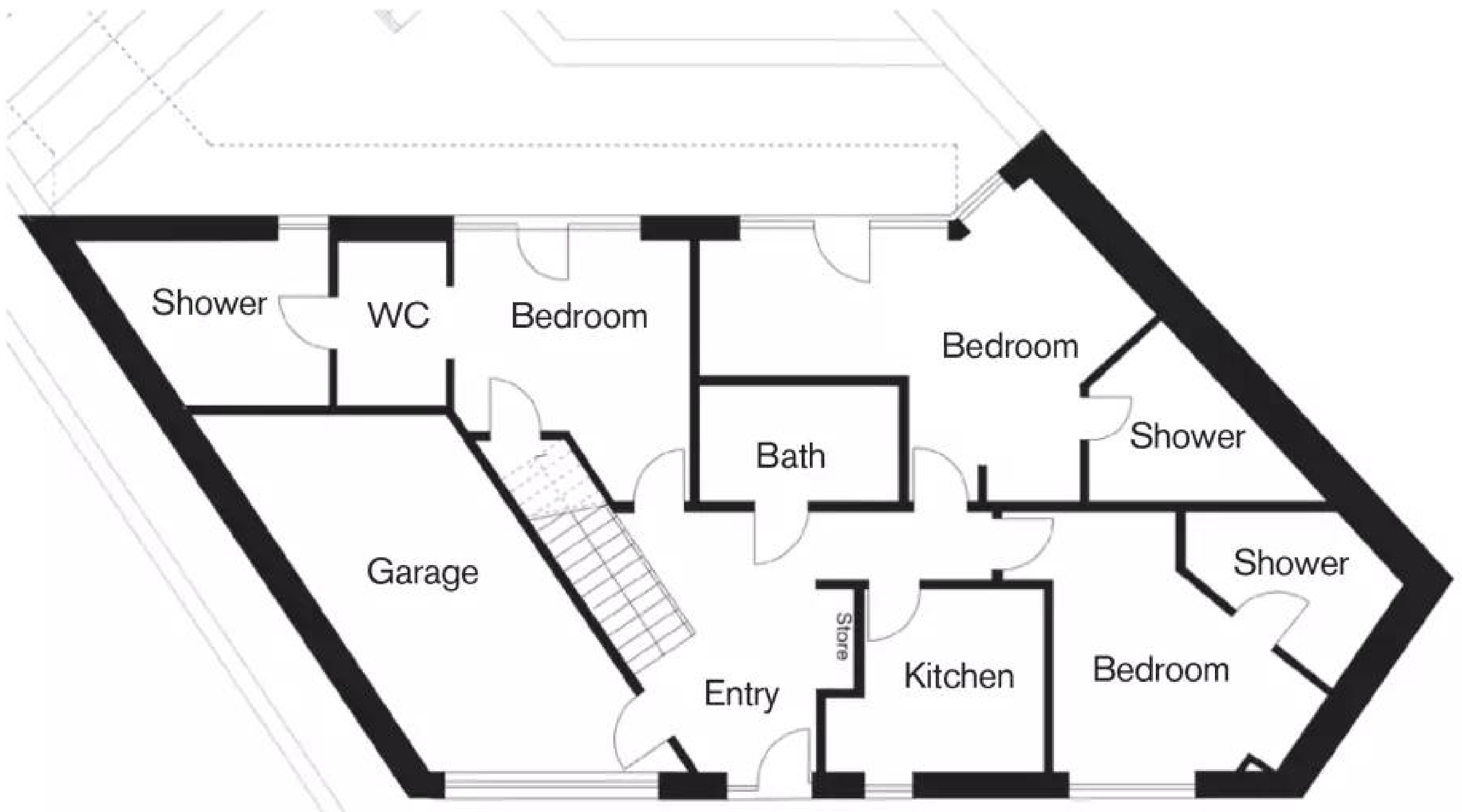
An impressive focal feature, the couple opted to include a statement fireplace in their living space. Visually stunning, the Boley 997 by Modus Fireplaces boasts a striking exposed flue that stretches up to the ceiling and is part-closed with glass blades, allowing for a two-sided view of the flames. The ideal statement piece for a large, open space, the feature also provides the room with additional warmth come winter. The appliance comes with an optional rotating mechanism, which allows the flames to be enjoyed from anywhere in the room.



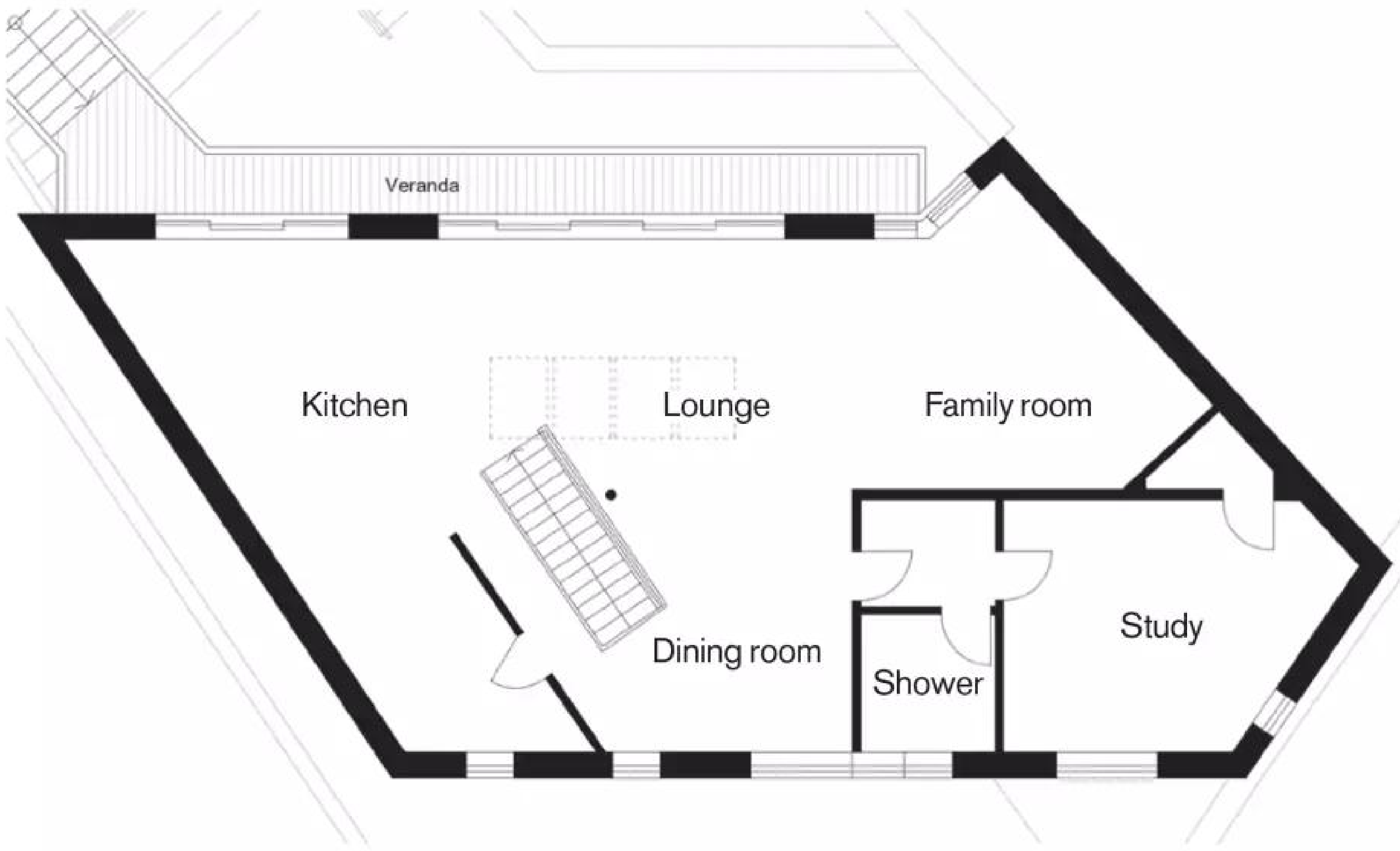
Striking feature

Floor plans

Ground floor



First floor



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£176	6%	£51,460
Foundations	£427	15%	£124,822
External walls & windows (including timber frame)	£1,116	39%	£325,802
Roof structure & covering	£84	3%	£24,400
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£68	2%	£19,832
Joinery & fittings	£406	14%	£118,472
Plumbing & heating (incl bathroom & kitchen)	£167	6%	£48,876
Electrics	£62	2%	£17,965
Decorating	£16	1%	£4,632
Fees	£238	8%	£69,364
External works	£120	4%	£34,908
Grand total			**£840,533**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS **Zone Architects** 0131 551 1973 www.zonearchitects.co.uk LAND SURVEY **Bell Surveys** 01383 853 015 www.bell-surveys.com GROUNDWORKS, DRAINAGE & LANDSCAPING **A J McPherson** 07740 502463 www.ajmcphersonltd.co.uk STRUCTURAL ENGINEER **Elliott & Company Consulting Engineers** 0131 220 2486 www.ecoeng.co.uk KIT INSTALLATION **Beechrow Homes** 01236 725077 STONE **Dunhouse Quarry Co** 01833 660208 www.dunhouse.co.uk STONEMASONRY **Sheed Stonemasonry** 07411 911425 www.sheedstonemasonry.com SIBERIAN LARCH CLADDING **Russwood** 01540 673648 www.russwood.co.uk ROOF **Real Roofing** 07919 370498 www.realroofing.co.uk GLAZING **NorDan** 01506 433 173 www.nordan.co.uk JOINERY **C J McCann Joinery** 07812 784849 BUILDERS MERCHANT **Travis Perkins** 0330 123 3846 www.travisperkins.co.uk TIMBER PRODUCTS **Orchard Timber** 01506 833600 www.orchardtimberproducts.co.uk KITCHEN **Benchmarx Kitchens & Joinery** 0131 554 6489 www.benchmarxkitchens.co.uk BATHROOMS **Victoria Plum** 0344 264 4141 www.victoriaplumbing.co.uk ELECTRICAL WHOLESALER **Bemco Electrical** 0191 230 5449 www.bemco.co.uk BLACKSMITH **Craig Engineering (Bathgate)** 07796 831814 HOME SECURITY **CSS Security Systems** 0800 783 6486 www.cssltd.co.uk; **Visioncom Integrated** 0131 226 4461 GARAGE DOOR **The Garage Door Company Scotland** 0131 337 3332 www.garagedooruk.com DECORATING **Chris Keppie Painters & Decorators** 0131 657 3199 www.chriskeppie.co.uk MVHR **BCP** 028 28 275 150 www.bpcventilation.com HEATED DRIVEWAY **HDS Heated Drive** 02081 330 448 www.heateddrivewaysystems.co.uk SEDUM ROOF **Optigreen Limited (Optigrün)** 0203 589 9400 www.optigruen.co.uk FIREPLACE **Modus Fireplaces** 020 8906 9988 www.modusfireplaces.com

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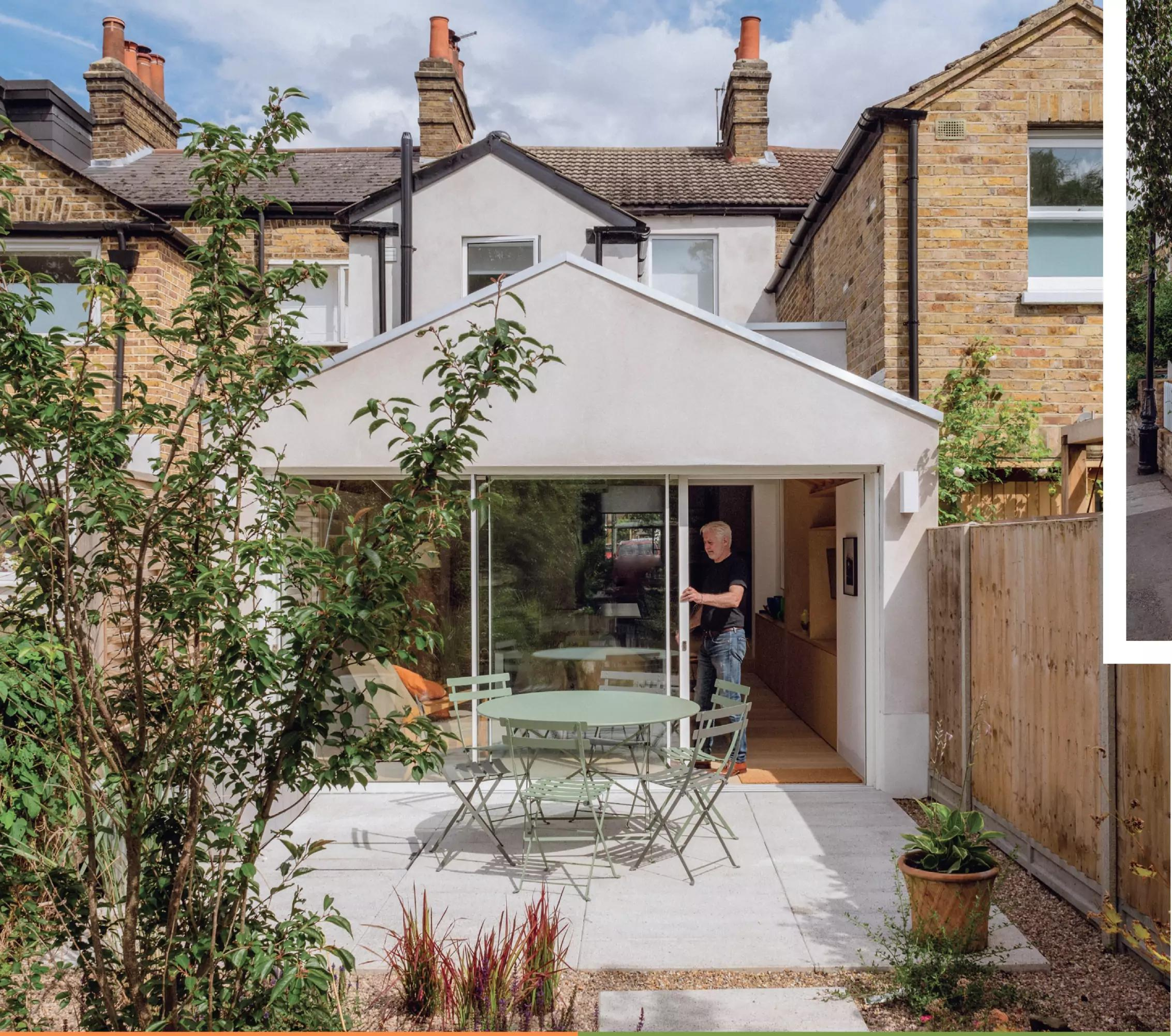


CONSERVATION INSPIRATION

On the hunt for a fixer upper, **Ian Turkington** transformed a Victorian property in east London with a contemporary extension and sustainable upgrades

WORDS **ALEXANDRA PRATT** PHOTOS **WHITTAKER PARSON**

Above: The garden is long and narrow, so Ian cleared the outdoor space and designed a winding path to create a more dynamic perspective

Above right: The original Victorian brick frontage was fully restored, with new double-glazed windows carefully aligned with the neighboring homes'

East London might not seem like the best place for a landscape architect to create a garden paradise, but this small Victorian cottage gave Ian Turkington the chance he'd been waiting for. "I was fed up with living in flats and I wanted a house," says Ian. "My son started looking in Walthamstow and I thought the area was lovely. There is a great selection of independent shops, good restaurants and a nice vibe. Then, this house came up. It's in a terrace of four cottages on a lovely street with great architecture."

Above all, the property has something that's rare to find in London, a very large, 32m-long garden. Once Ian bought the property and moved in, he – unsurprisingly – immediately started work on the precious outdoor space. However, this wasn't just due to Ian's love of all things botanical. As the cottage is a terraced property, everything removed from the garden had to be taken out through the main house. So, it made practical sense for the outside space to be cleared first to remove all rubbish before restoring and extending the existing structure.

FACT FILE

NAME Ian Turkington

OCCUPATION Owner of Turkington Martin Landscape Architects

LOCATION Walthamstow, East London

STYLE Contemporary renovation & extension of a Victorian cottage

CONSTRUCTION METHOD Concrete block

PROJECT ROUTE Architect & main contractor

HOUSE SIZE 93m²

PROJECT COST £162,000

PROJECT COST PER M² £1,742

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED May 2022

BUILDING WORK TOOK 11 months

Despite being liveable, the cottage was in poor condition. Damp, rotten timbers and a series of small dark rooms made up the original building, which had been added to at some point with a couple of shed-like extensions to the rear. "It was horrible," says Ian. "The garden was overgrown, and the previous owners hadn't done a thing to it. But I was looking for a doer-upper and it was more manageable than a full self build project."

Developing the design

Ian wanted to transform this cottage into a light-filled home with the space to display his prized collection of 20th century British art, glass and ceramics. That journey started with finding the right team. Despite his own design skills and industry experience, Ian knew he wanted to employ an architect, to ensure any changes would add value to the property, as well as reduce the stress on him personally during the project. Turning to an architectural trade website, Ian looked explored completed projects similar to his own before finding the London-based practice Whittaker Parsons. "I wanted to give a younger practice a chance," he says. "And right from our first meeting, I had great confidence in them."

Ian's brief was for a more efficient, ergonomic and sociable home. Creating a direct connection to the garden and framing views of the new, prairie-style planting was high on his must have list. Ian also wanted to restore the cottage's front, which had been poorly altered. The modern windows were out of proportion with the original Victorian facade. Architect Matt Whittaker produced three or four options for Ian to consider. "Our main goal was to extend and improve the health of the existing building and connect it to the newly planted garden," says Matt.

However, the first design that went to the local planning office for pre-application advice was an extension with a flat roof, which was deemed too high. The second design was swiftly granted permission, including repairs and improvements to the original structure, plus a new rear extension with a dual-pitch timber and cranked flitch beam roof. The ground floor was remodelled to create an open-plan but zoned living, dining and kitchen space

I LEARNED...

APPOINT AN ARCHITECT to be responsible for the contract through to work on site. It will save you a lot of stress rather than running your own project.

GET ADVICE FROM RIBA to help find a trusted architect in your area. Local firms are more likely to turn up and will know good builders in the region.

BE MINDFUL OF GLAZING size and placement, especially with south-facing windows, which can lead to overheating.

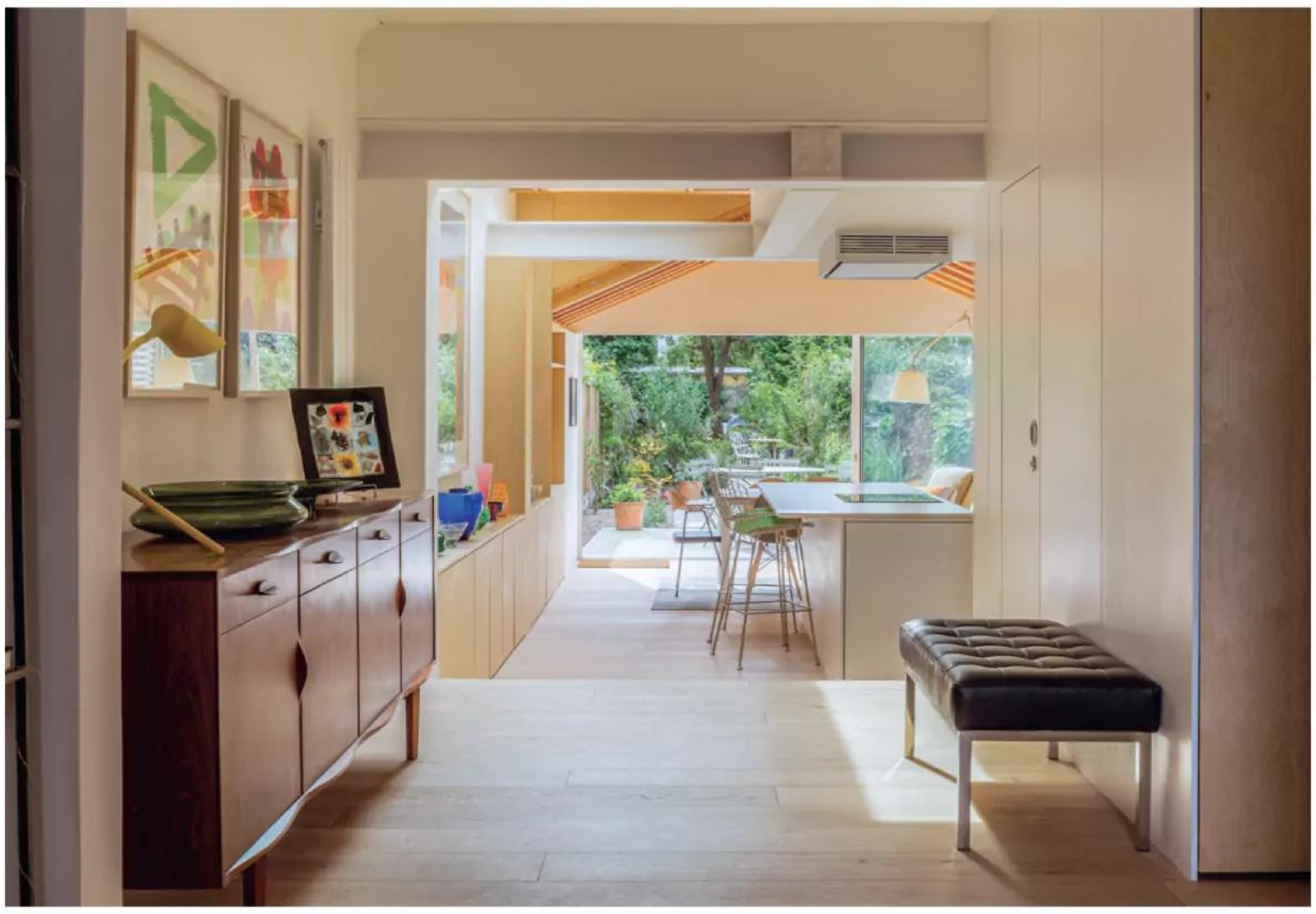
Right: Ian had originally intended the elegant front form to be separated from the extension by a glazed screen, but this was dropped due to cost

that boasts plenty of storage and wonderful garden views. "That negative first response from the planners led serendipitously to an even better solution," says Ian.

Clever design

The defining feature of the ground floor is the extension, with its' vaulted ceiling and exposed beams. A flitch beam is simply a steel plate sandwiched between two pieces of timber, bolted together and angled, or cranked, to form the pitch.

"It's a slightly unusual choice, but there were sound reasons behind it", says Matt. "We wanted to create a very modern space from a traditional building, making it as open as possible. Steel was too industrial, and timber alone would have required bigger beams with ties. The flitch is an elegant feature and by leaving it on show you bring lots of beautiful detail into the project." This approach also led to some savings, as steel would have been more expensive to use. Leaving the beams exposed further reduced material costs. This was vital, as the budget was a key driver in

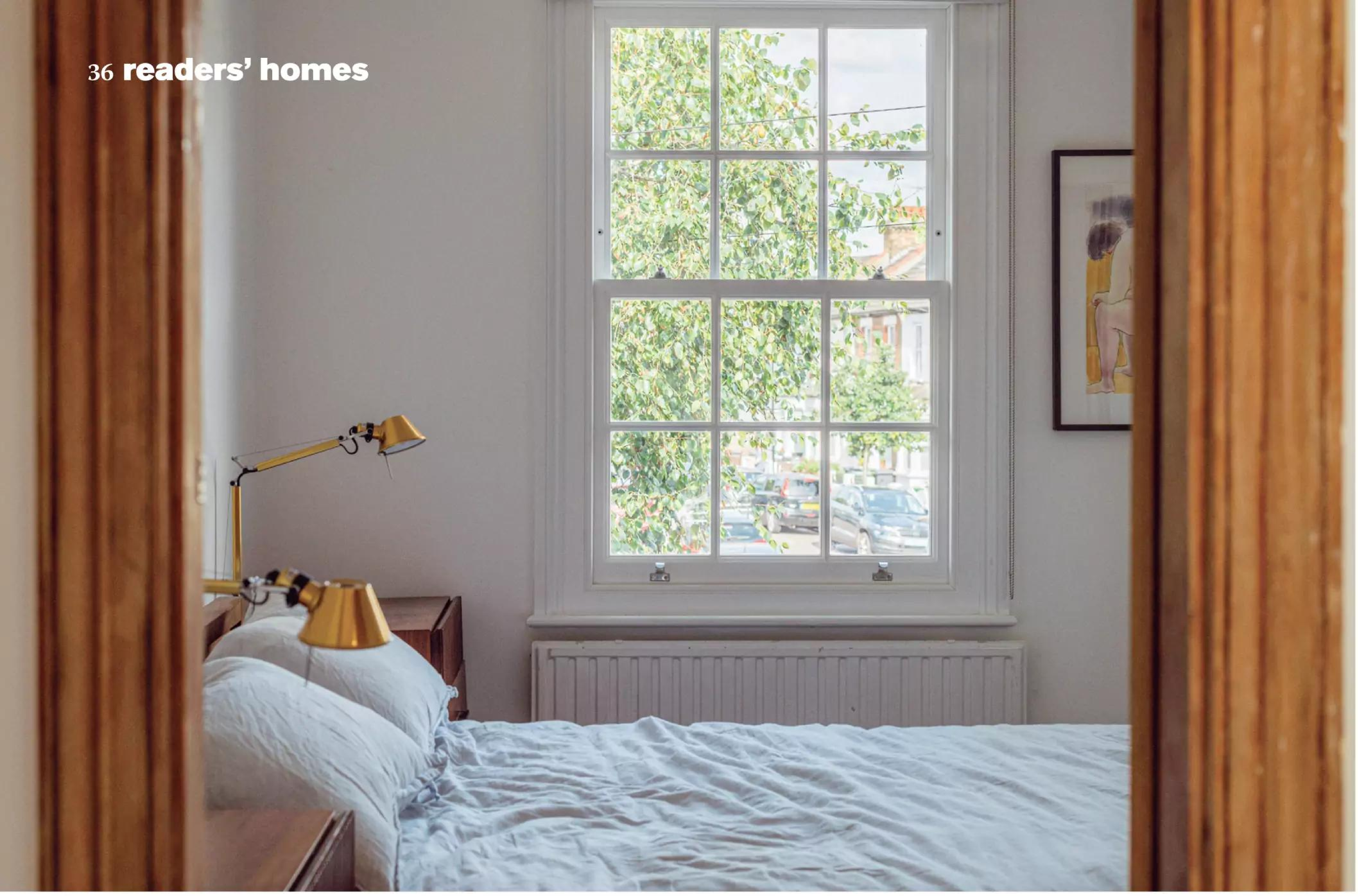


the project, something Matt views as a positive thing. "We couldn't get carried away and get self-indulgent," he says. "We had to be as efficient as possible."

Despite initial savings, extra money was spent elsewhere. As with many renovation projects, the more you uncover, the more you find to repair. Ian discovered he needed to replace rotten joists and install a new staircase, at a cost of £7,000. The outrigger bathroom on the second floor required some serious TLC. Here, steel was used and painted over to be more sympathetic to the cottage aesthetic in the original upper storey. "We went as far as we could in upgrading the building," says Matt. "Far beyond Building Regulation standards."

Ian wanted a sustainable and healthy home, which made material choices critical. The new extension was built using Environblock, a masonry block made from recycled materials, while the windows have all been replaced with double-glazed

Right: The pared back interior scheme is complemented by carefully selected accent colours and textures, providing warmth and character throughout the home

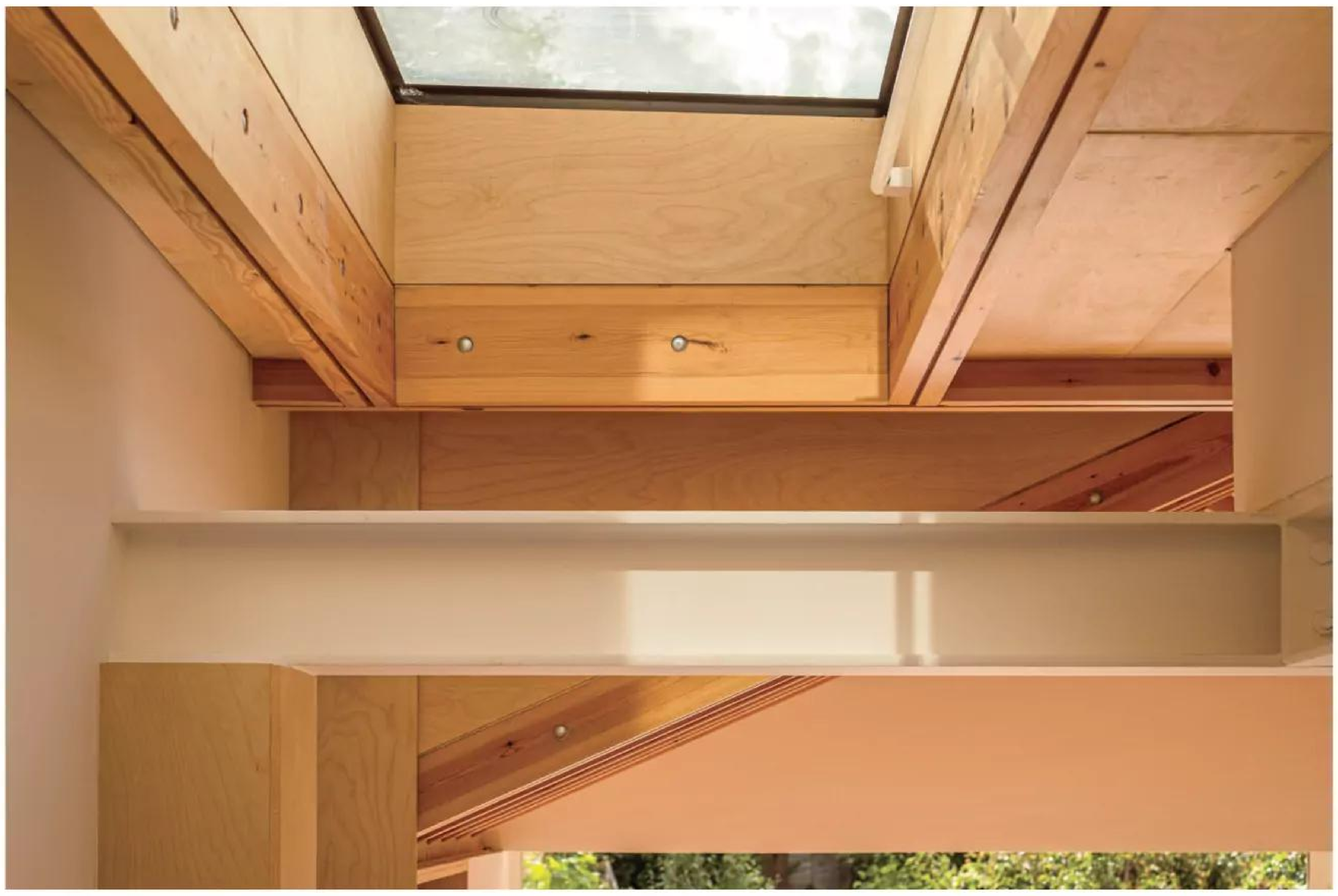


units. Those at the front are now aligned with the size and shape of the neighbouring properties. The entire rear elevation is lime-rendered, which allows the building to breathe. Plus, the home is now warm and dry, thanks to jute insulation made from old coffee-bean sacks.

Timeless interiors

Inside, oak flooring gives new warmth to the interior and is sympathetic to the original cottage. Elsewhere, birch plywood provides a consistent finish across all interior joinery. "I liked the idea of an exposed unpainted plywood," says Ian. "It matches the cladding on the steelwork." With the whole ground floor open plan, the original cottage sitting room is connected to the extension, yet careful zoning has kept the character in this part of the ground floor. A new white granite fireplace creates a focal point. The original cornices add period detail and the room's unusually high ceilings ensures it never feels cramped. "I'm not big on colour; the art adds that and ties all the elements together," says Ian. He also ensured some walls were painted white, rather than covered in plywood panels, to better display his artwork. Housing his art collection also influenced Ian's decisions around the interior joinery and, as a result, a long shelf runs through the extension. This also allows significant storage below.

A central feature of the extension is the new kitchen. Mindful of the budget, Ian chose plain white cabinetry from Howdens. There are no handles and very little chrome. The worktop is made from Neolith, a brand of sintered stone. Ian enjoys the kitchen's simplicity, elegance and value for money, but keeping this area clear is a challenge. "It means I have to curate it, otherwise everything is on display, and I like it neat and tidy," he says.

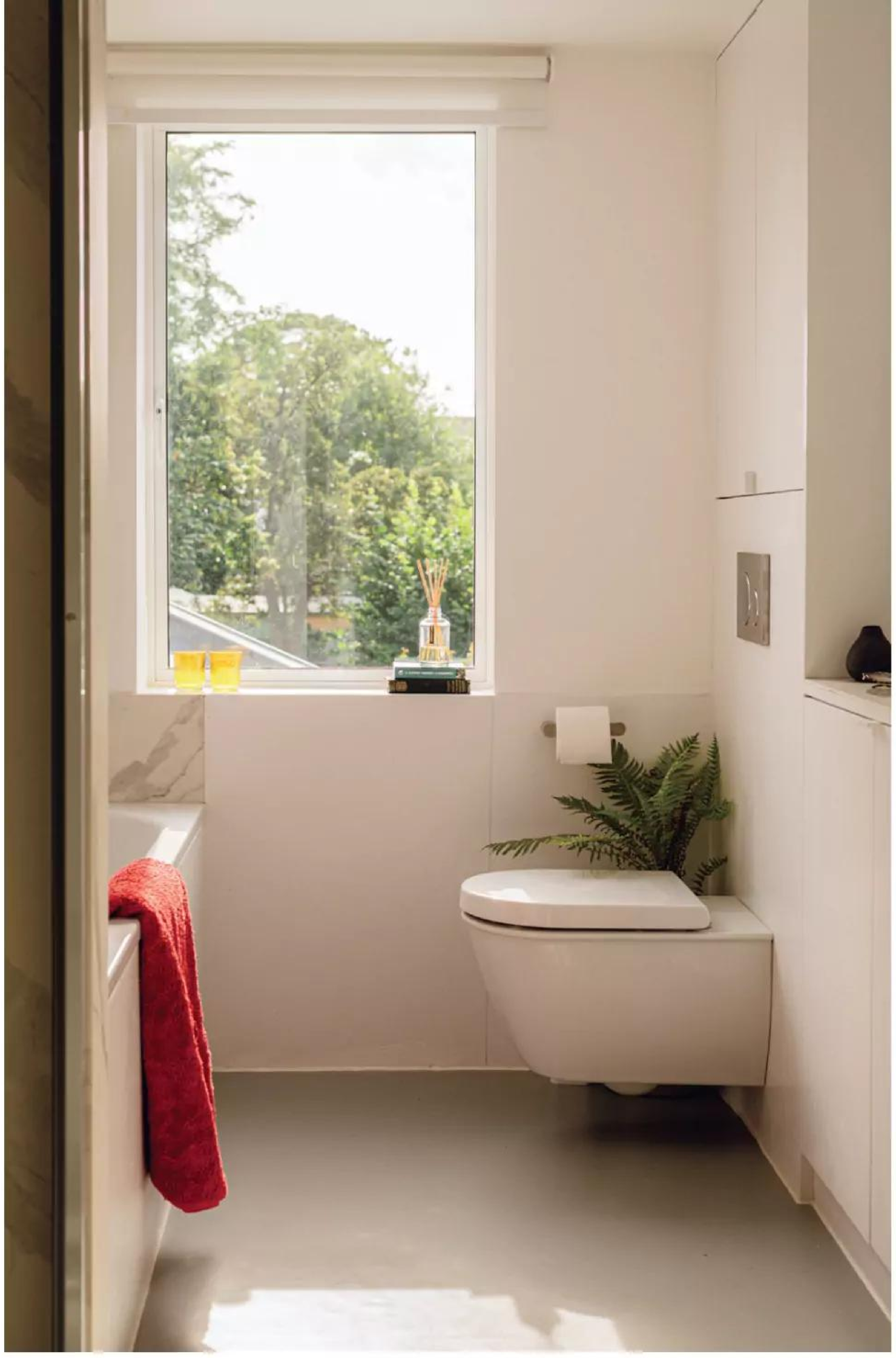


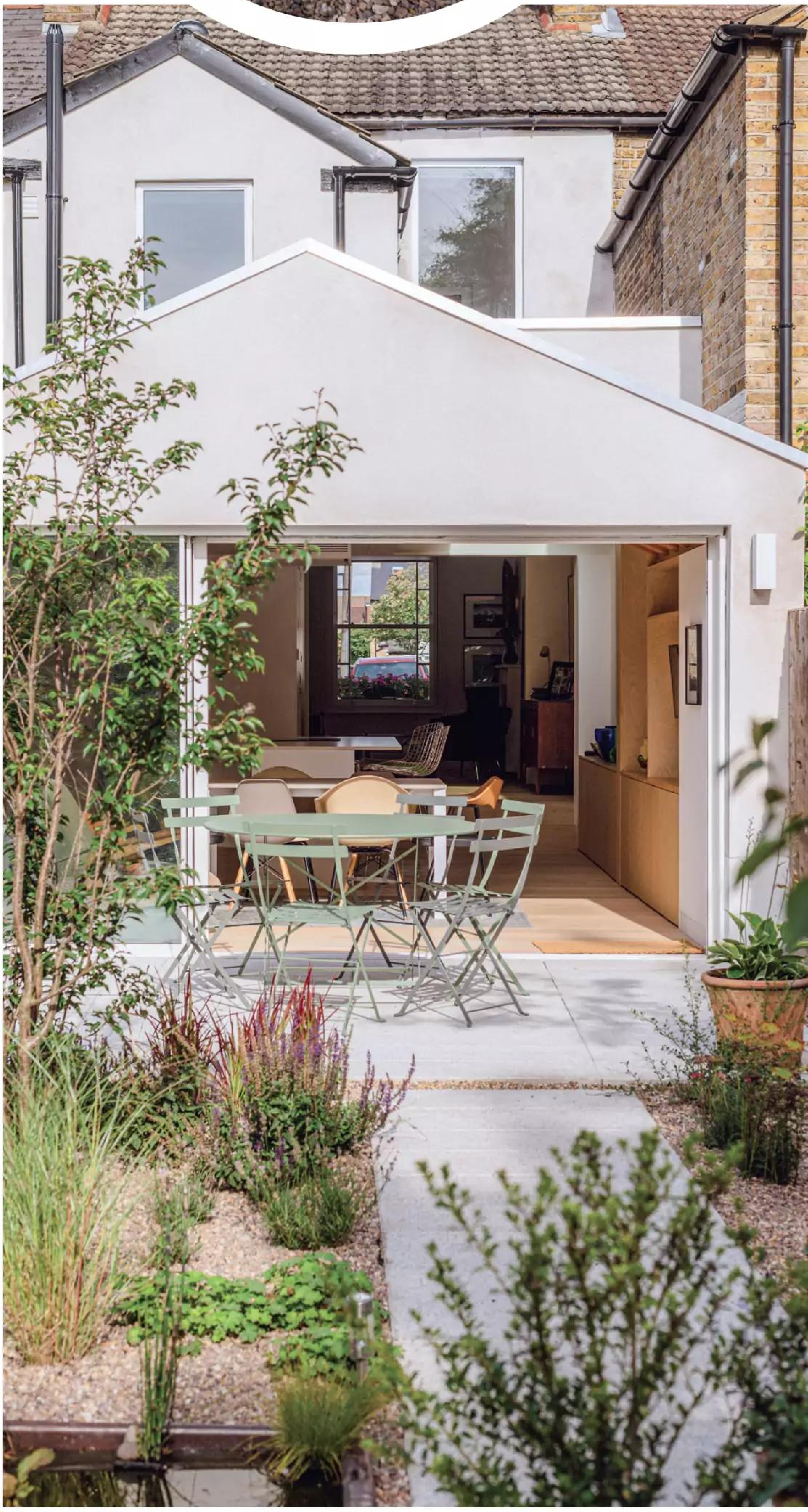
Above: The flitch beam gives the strength of steel, but the birch suits the cottage aesthetic beautifully. Birch ply joinery ties the interior scheme together throughout the home

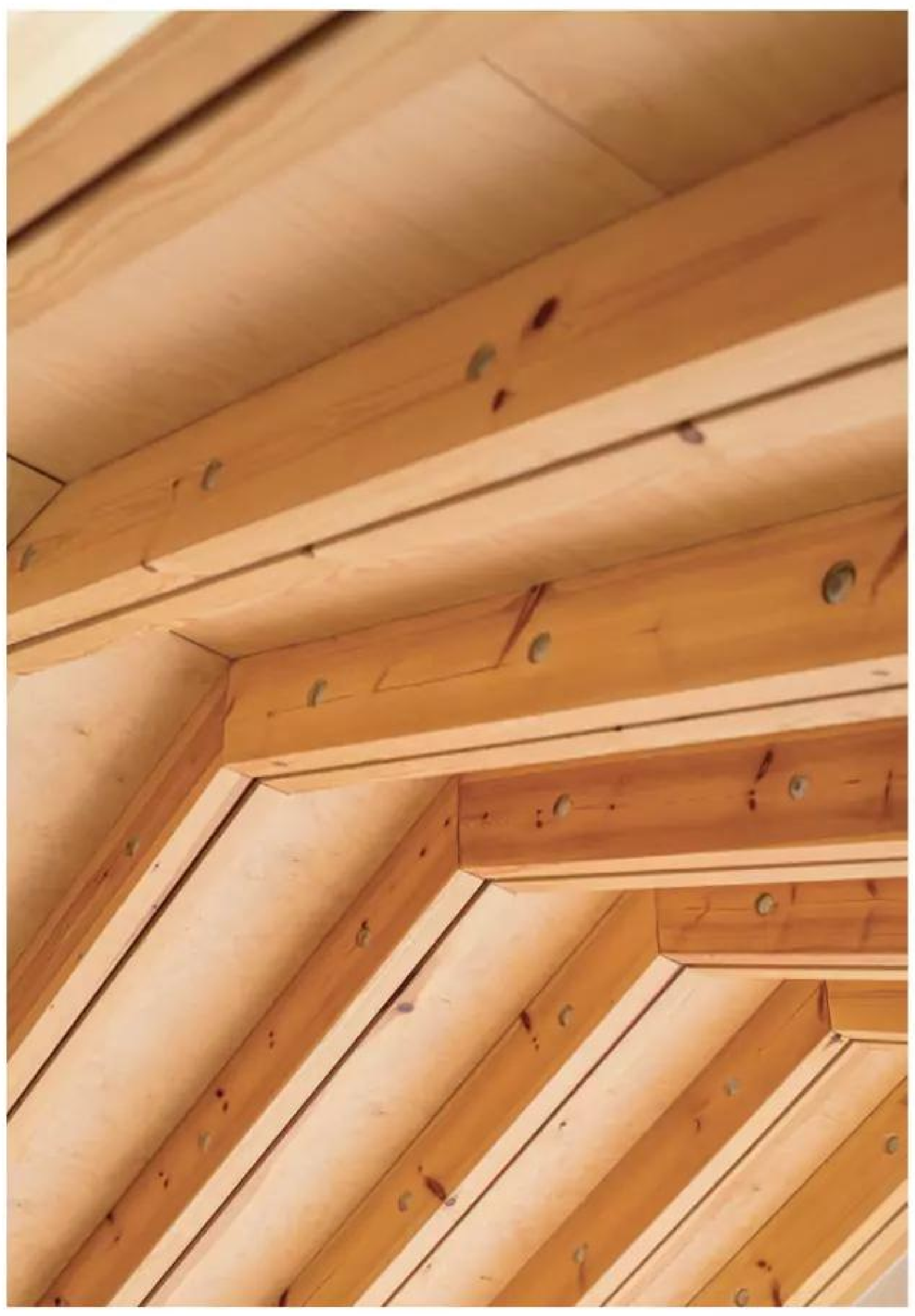
Bumps in the road

Only the glazing caused delays to the completion date, but Ian is grateful that this didn't also increase costs at the same time. Aside from the sliding glass door onto the garden, large rooflights drop light into the centre of the ground floor, while the new double-glazed conservation windows bring both light and character into the front of the cottage.

The biggest challenge for Ian was personal. Having forgotten to factor in the cost of a rental home during the building works, he was forced to rent a very small flat nearby – sharing with his son.







Above: The outrigger houses the bathroom, which was also renovated with a shower, bath and fittings. Electric underfloor heating keeps this room warm

Left: Exposed timber was both a cost-saving solution and a stylish design choice

Right: The garden is planted with evergreens, grasses and perennials in a prairie style scheme. As a landscape architect, Ian took pride in this aspect of the project, creating a stunning outdoor space to enjoy

Now Ian has moved in, what he loves most is the space, natural light and the building's relationship with the garden. The cottage's conversion into a light-filled, contemporary home has been extraordinary. The original fabric was secured and improved, with an inventive extension to the rear that is the new heart of the home, and this directly connects to Ian's stunning new prairie garden. The rejuvenated cottage is now also the ideal backdrop for Ian's collection of British art, and he's loving every minute of living in his new space. "It gives me great pleasure to come home and wake up in the morning, to walk into the kitchen and the garden behind. You can see all the tall neighbouring trees, so it feels like a park. Living here has been totally transformational."

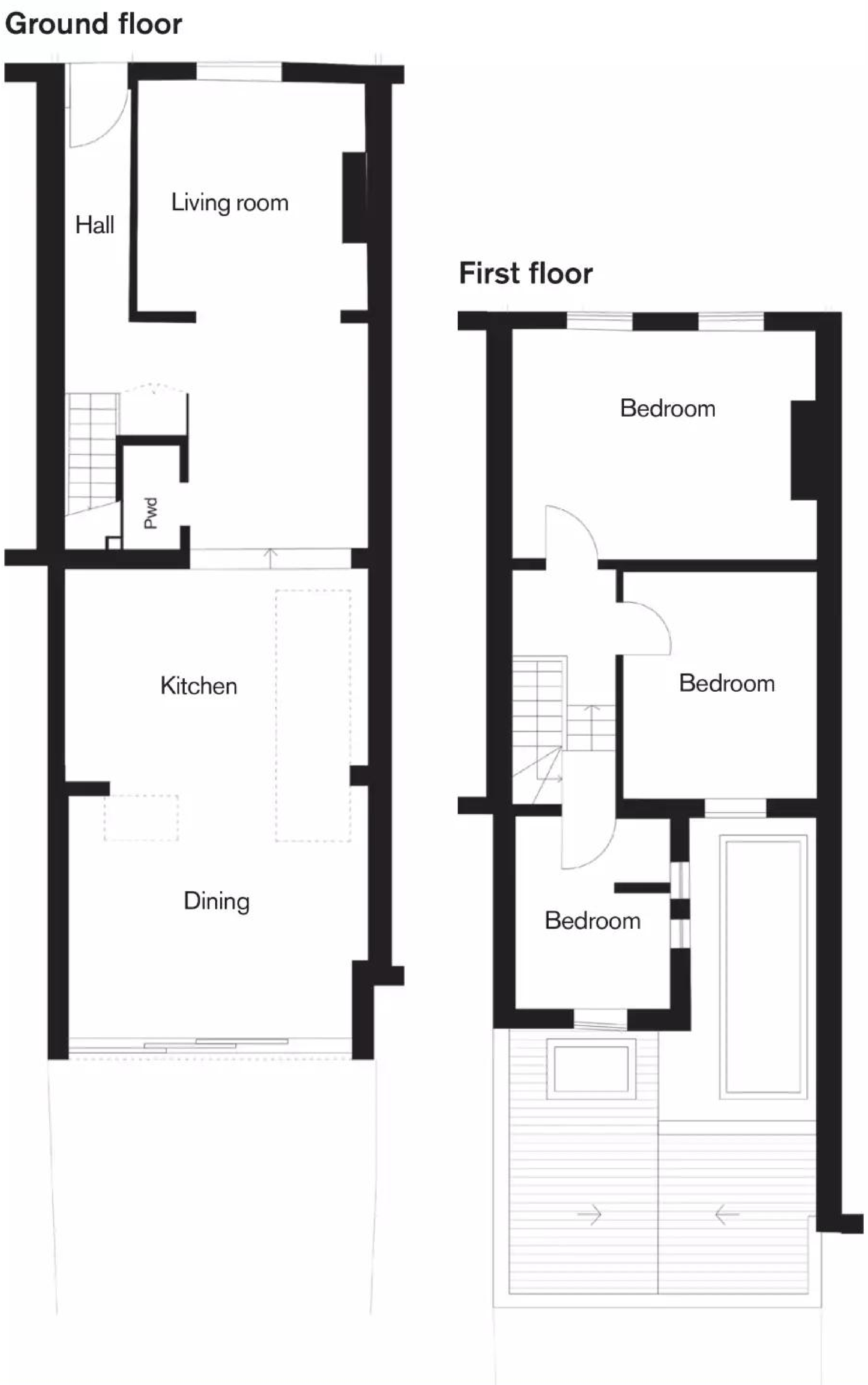
closer look

Sustainable insulation…

As environmental concerns take centre stage, the range of eco-friendly products continues to grow. Glass wool and mineral wool have long been popular choices. Made from melted and spun fiberglass or stone, they offer excellent performance at a relatively low cost; around £9 per m², with an R-value of 0.57 per inch of thickness. Widely available, they remain a reliable and efficient insulation option. Ian and Matt chose a product made from both recycled jute and carbon-negative natural hemp, sourced from Ecological Building Systems. Suitable for roofs, walls, suspended floors etc, it has a Class A acoustic rating, regulates humidity, is fire-resistant and perfect for DIY applications without PPE. The company now offer an updated version of the product – IndiBreathe Flex. Sheep's wool, wood wool board, wood fibre batts and lime, clay and cork insulating plaster – which is a great solution for solid walls – are also ideal for adding to the eco-credentials of your build. Prices range from £14 per m² to over £50 per m².

Green choice

Floor plans



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£150	9%	£14,000
Demolition & excavation	£150	9%	£14,000
Structure (including block work)	£300	17%	£28,000
Glazing	£150	9%	£14,000
Kitchen, joinery & sanitary ware	£280	16%	£26,000
Internal decoration & finishes	£182	10%	£17,000
External works	£300	17%	£28,000
Mechanical & electrical	£225	13%	£21,000
Grand total			**£162,000**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT **Whittaker Parsons** www.whittakerparsons.com 0203 763 7443 INSULATION **Hemp Flax Thermo Hemp Combi Jute** www.ecologicalbuildingsystems.com 01228 711511 GLAZING **Maxlight** www.maxlight.co.uk 02088960700 BUILDER **IK Construction** www.ikconstruction.co.uk 020 8441 9796 CONCRETE BLOCKS **Environblock** www.masterblock.co.uk

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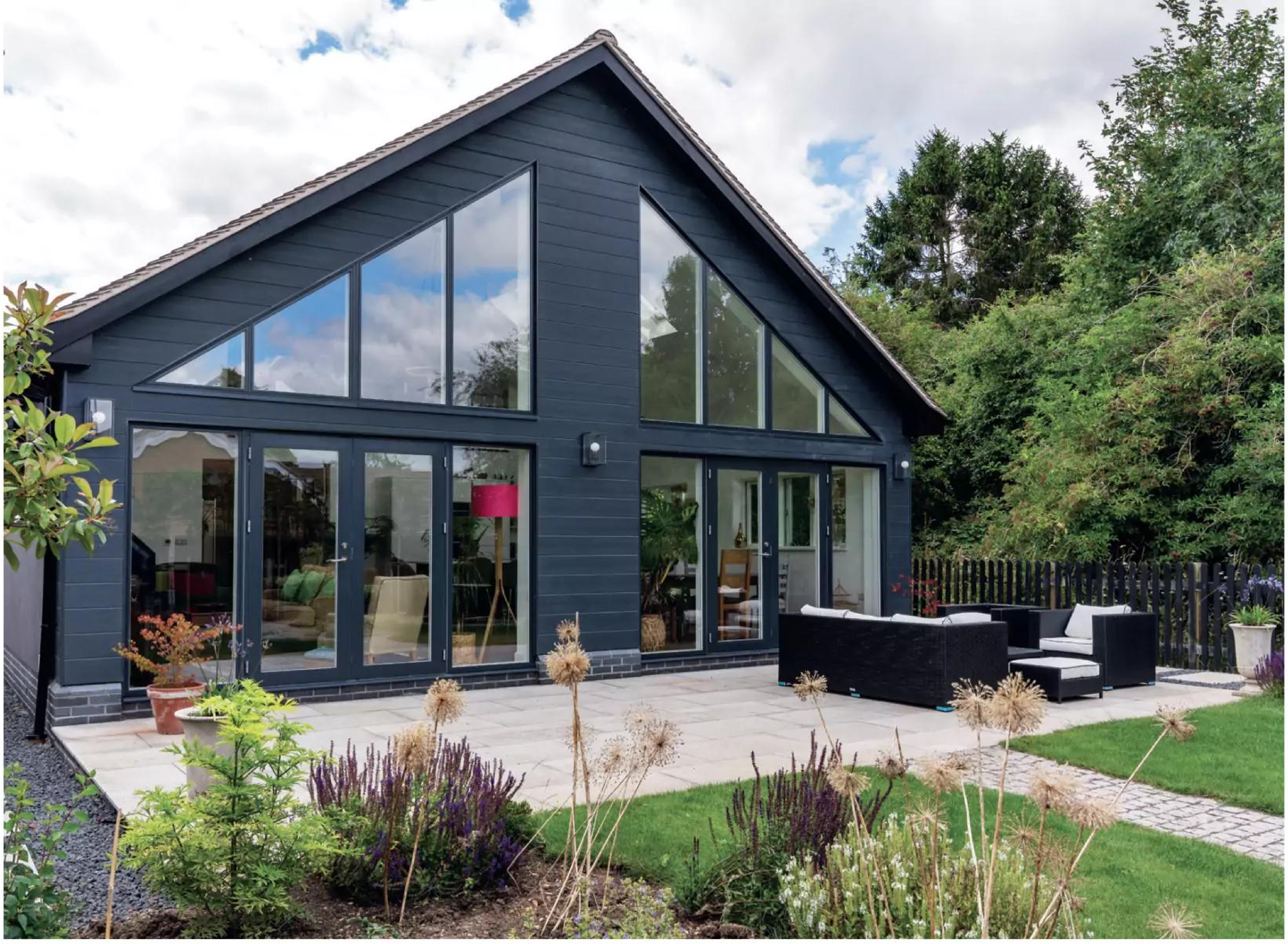
Golden opportunity

Tracy Gordon took a chance on buying an allotment at the end of her garden to build on, working through some early planning challenges to create a bespoke haven she loves

WORDS **EMILY BROOKS** PHOTOS **POTTON**

It was a stroke of luck that led Tracy Gordon to buy the plot of land for her new three-bedroom house in Stamford, Lincolnshire. "At the end of my garden there was an allotment that I didn't really know anything about. Then, by chance, I met its owner, who turned out to have grown up in my house," she says. "We got chatting and I invited him over to see his childhood home. I told him, 'if you ever want to sell that allotment, get in touch.'"

A few months later, the call came, and Tracy jumped at the chance to buy the 500m^2 plot. This kind of amenity land can be challenging



Below left: Potton designed the house, which has a simple gable shape, with one corner cut out to lead the eye into the front door area. Cypress trees set into planting areas ringed by a circle of stone enhance the contemporary aesthetic

Far left & left: Tracy chose fibre-cement interlocking weatherboard cladding over real timber for its low maintenance and durability

when it comes to gaining consent for building on – but, although there was no planning permission attached, other neighbouring properties had been completed on the allotments. So, Tracy felt confident that she would have a good chance of being able to erect a small dwelling there. "I thought it was a great opportunity: they weren't asking very much, and I was the only person that had access to that bit of land. It just seemed like a good investment," she says. "My old house was a 1930s semi-detached with a lovely garden, but I'd always been keen to build my own home."

Tracy had been strongly motivated to take on a project after a visit to the Potton Self Build Show Centre in Cambridgeshire. "We'd sometimes go there for a look around," she says. "It's inspirational – you can see all styles of houses there, and it just makes it all seem very doable. Before that, I'd never really considered it." She had previously made informal enquiries to local planners about building on her garden, which had been knocked back. But, given local planning history, the allotment presented a very good chance of securing permission.

Getting set

Tracy engaged Potton's services and an action plan swung into place. The package home specialist's own architectural team designed the house, which, with its dark grey cladding and tonally matched window frames, was inspired by Suffolk's traditional black barns – albeit with a much more contemporary design language.

Planning was initially refused due to the house's height. So, the scheme was redrawn as effectively a single-storey dwelling, with a pitched roof and a mezzanine room built into the eaves to achieve the floor space Tracy wanted. The main bedroom and ensuite are on the mezzanine, while there are two further bedrooms downstairs.

The size of the house, however, did not prove to be the greatest planning obstacle. "The plot of land next to mine is a wooded area, and it has badgers. That turned out to be my biggest problem," says Tracy. "There was a question over whether their setts continued under my land, where I wanted to build." Badgers and their setts are protected. Interfering with them in any way is illegal: it wouldn't have been possible to construct the house's foundations if they had an underground presence on Tracy's plot.

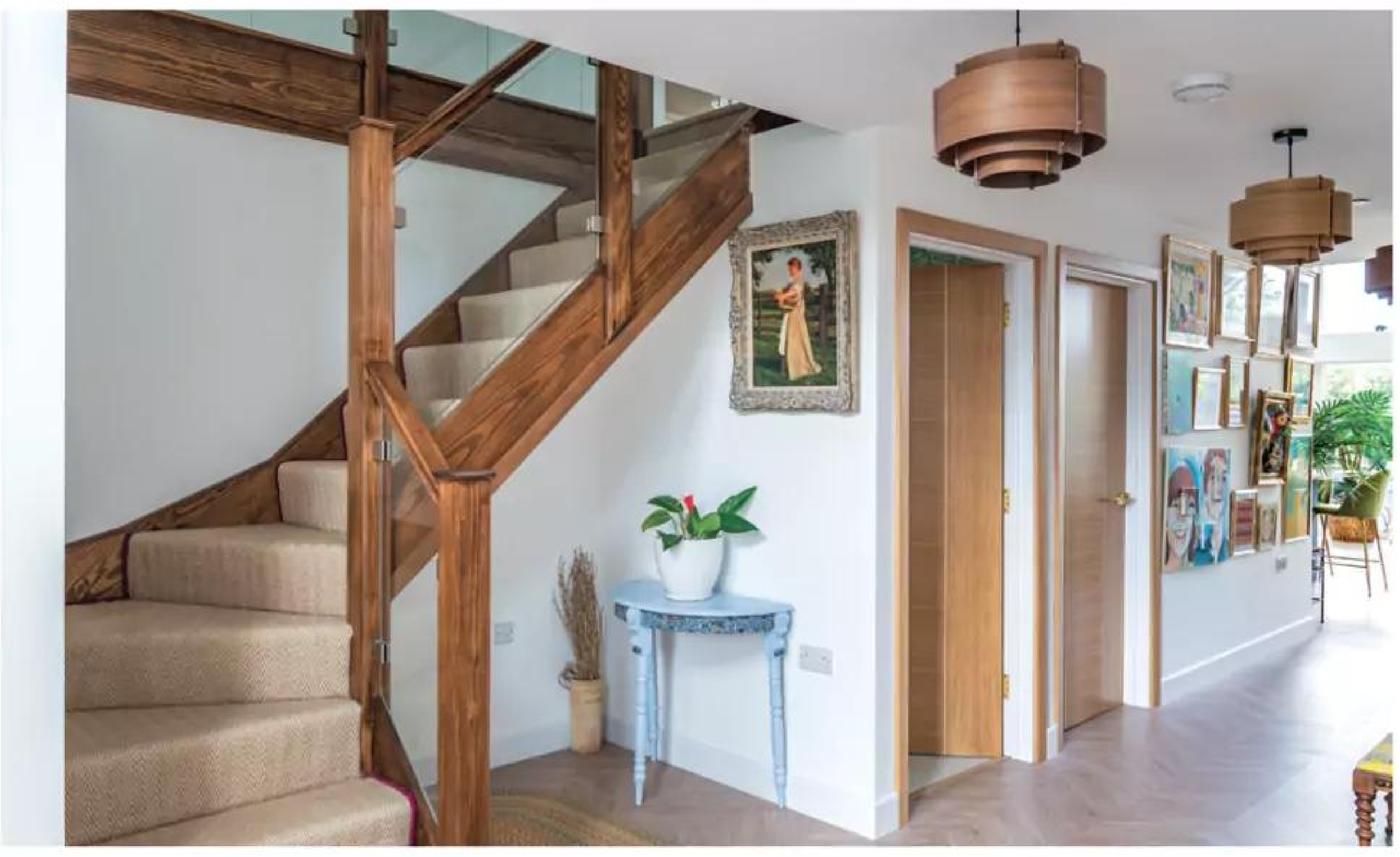
"We had to have several ecological surveys, and it took ages – this was during Covid when everything was just much, much slower," she says. Eventually, a sonic survey gave her the all-clear, but she then needed to erect badger-proof fencing, which stretched several metres underground, to prevent them accessing the plot in the future. "That was the final hurdle," says Tracy.

The right team

With planning granted and the badgers' safety secured, the build was on. Tracy sold her house and moved in with her parents nearby for the duration of the construction works. As part of the sale process, she retained a portion of the driveway – as well as knocking down an old garage – to provide access to the plot. The drive was narrow but not too problematic: Potton used a crane to deliver the timber frame, while some other larger items were conveyed to site using a forklift running up and down the access.

Tracy didn't intend to get hands-on with the build itself, so she engaged the services of a project management company, 3PM Construction, who came recommended by Potton. They charged a fixed fee of £30,000, arranging all the subcontractors and overseeing progress. "I could never have managed it because I didn't know enough about it," she says. "Tom and Dave from 3PM just took care of everything, really. They were just fantastic, as was everyone else who came in on the project. I needed someone who I could rely on and ask stupid questions to – which I probably did, a lot!

"I'd stop by nearly every day on my way home from work to have a quick look and see what had been done," Tracy continues. "It was so much fun seeing every single bit of it come together, from the foundations – where you can actually walk around the footprint of the house – to the timber frame going up and the plasterboard being installed." 3PM Construction's fixed fee proved useful, as factors such as Covid and the start of the Ukraine war pushed prices up. "I think I ended up paying about 20% more than I had initially



Top: Defined zones of kitchen, dining area and living space rationalise the open-plan ground floor plan. The sitting area has a woodburning stove as a focal point. The flooring is luxury vinyl tiles (LVTs) from Karndean and the large timber pendant light is by Tom Raffield

Above: The staircase is made from rustic stained pine with a contemporary glass balustrade for contrast. The flight and the mezzanine bedroom are the only carpeted areas, giving a cosier feel underfoot

The dark, tile-clad wall adds textural interest, and echoes the dark tones used on the house's exterior, as well as making the TV more discreet. The high-level window maintains privacy from the neighbouring house

FACT FILE

NAME Tracy Gordon

OCCUPATION GP practice receptionist

LOCATION Lincolnshire

TYPE OF PROJECT Self build

STYLE Contemporary

CONSTRUCTION METHOD Timber frame

PROJECT ROUTE Potton design & house shell; project manager for follow-on works

PLOT SIZE 0.1 acres

LAND COST £25,766

BOUGHT April 2019

HOUSE SIZE 169m²

PROJECT COST £528,233

PROJECT COST PER M² £3,126

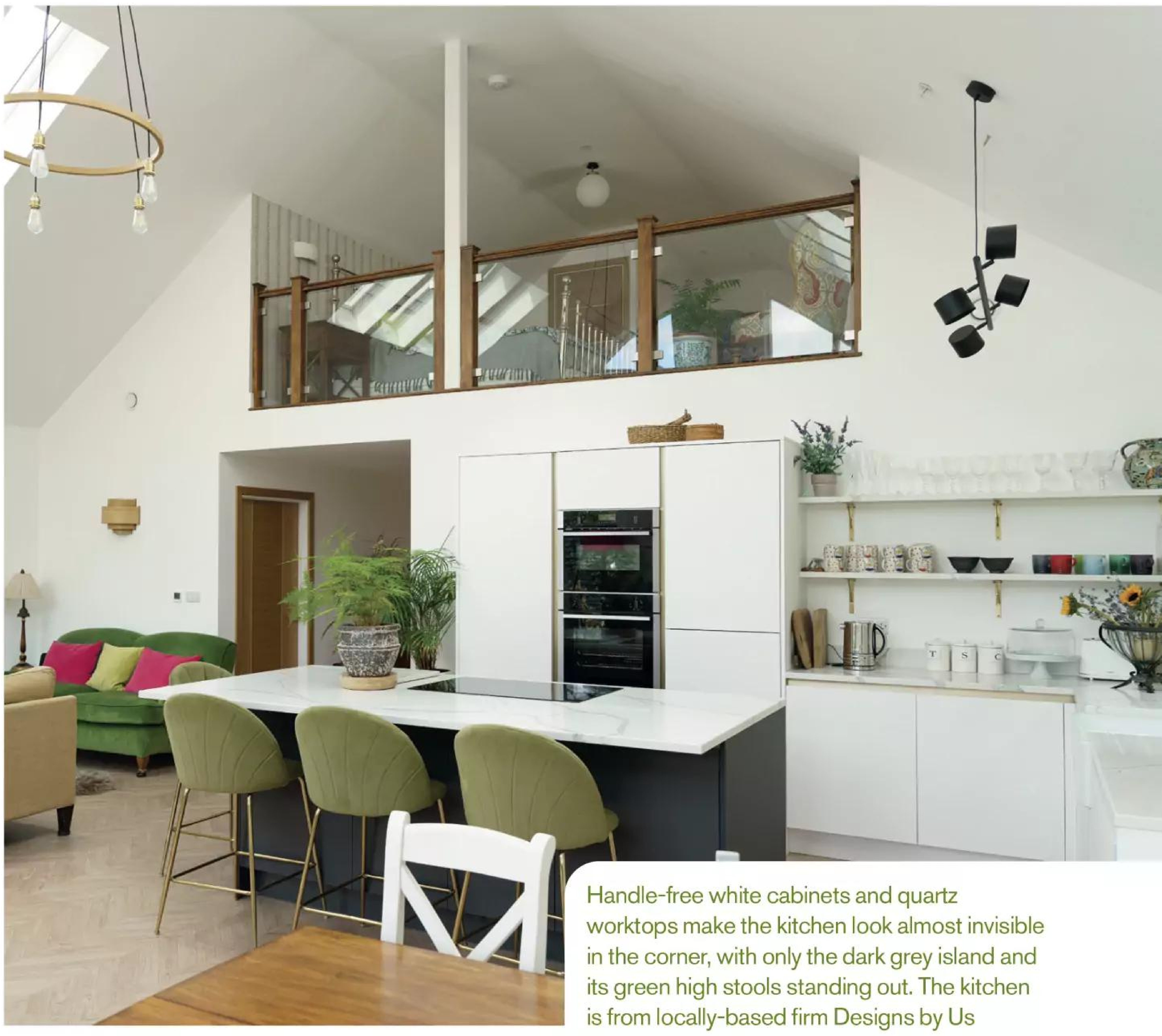
VAT RECLAIM £5,700

TOTAL COST £553,999

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED January 2022

BUILDING WORK TOOK 32 weeks

CURRENT VALUE £875,000



Handle-free white cabinets and quartz worktops make the kitchen look almost invisible in the corner, with only the dark grey island and its green high stools standing out. The kitchen is from locally-based firm Designs by Us

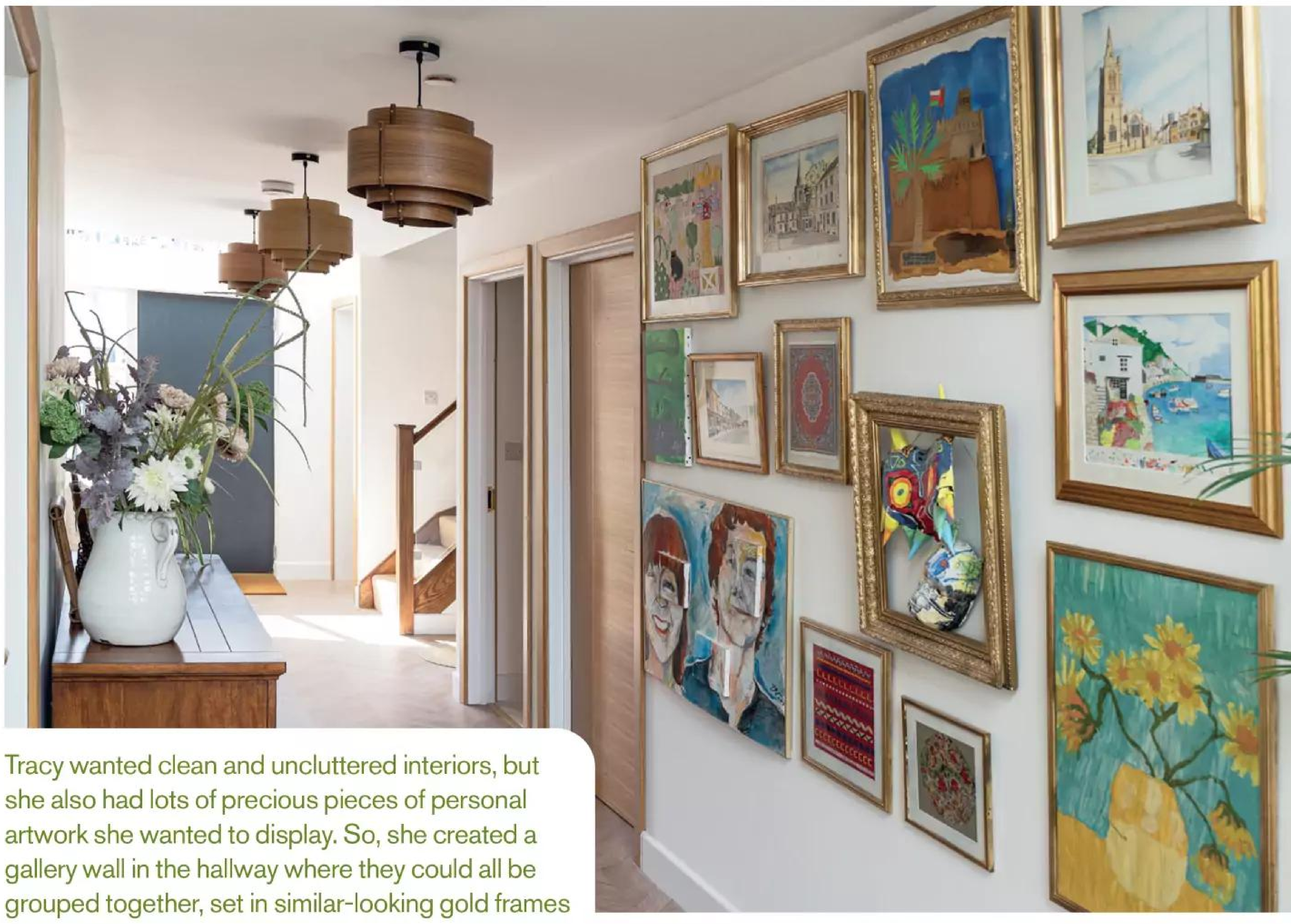
expected," says Tracy. But as long as the final budget didn't exceed the proceeds from selling her old home, she still felt comfortable.

Quick & efficient

Having not done a project like this before, Tracy was happy to go with Potton's recommendations for the underlying structure of the house. The walls are Kingspan's Ultima 15 closed-panel system, which delivers a good U-value of 0.15 W/m²K. It's topped with a cut roof, where the individual timber components are constructed on site, with two layers of 80mm Kingspan roofboard insulation and an additional 25mm of insulation on the underside of the rafters. The block and beam ground floor has 90mm of rigid insulation, atop which sits a 60mm screed, with water-based underfloor heating throughout. Rationel double-glazed windows, with a low-e coating, complete the thermally efficient, airtight envelope. Comfort levels are delivered efficiently via an air source heat pump and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) system, which also provides year-round fresh air.

Outside, the dark grey fibre-cement weatherboarding looks beautiful against the adjacent woodland, and Tracy has painted the fence the same hue to create a unified look. At the front, dark gravel and a path of stone setts leading to the door create a smart contemporary entrance, which also chimes with the architecture. A keen gardener, she spent all the time she was living at her parents' house carefully planning the landscaping and planting. "I wanted something structured and modern," says Tracy. "My old garden was quite big and it was a lot to look after, so being low-maintenance was important, too."

The whole project took 10 months to build on site, with Tracy moving in in November 2022. Her mezzanine bedroom suite is accessed from a timber and glass staircase in the generously proportioned hallway. There are a further two bedrooms (one of which she uses as a sewing room), a bathroom and a plant room downstairs. But the house's star attraction is its large, open-plan kitchen-dining-living space, fronted by glazing all across its gable end, plus windows either side, as well as rooflights that bring in



Tracy wanted clean and uncluttered interiors, but she also had lots of precious pieces of personal artwork she wanted to display. So, she created a gallery wall in the hallway where they could all be grouped together, set in similar-looking gold frames

I LEARNED...

IF YOU'RE INEXPERIENCED, then a professional project manager will be worth their weight in gold. Mine were wonderful and very supportive, and they went above and beyond for me.

ALLOW EXTRA TIME to carry out environmental surveys if you live in a rural area or are otherwise close to wildlife. Badger surveys set back the planning process by months.

GO FOR THE BEST YOU CAN AFFORD when it comes to things such as lighting – I'm glad I paid extra for mine, because it looks lovely and I always appreciate it.

LIVING NEXT TO WOODLAND has its quirks. If I had known how many squirrels would be digging up my lawn, I probably would have chosen something different for surfacing the garden.

Above & below: Tracy's bedroom overlooks the open-plan kitchen-living-dining area, so it has a feeling of being light and airy even though it is tucked under the eaves. A glass balustrade, framed in stained pine, ensures views out to the garden stay clear

Right: The ground-floor bathroom mixes faux-marble porcelain tiles with a splash of lush, leafy wallpaper, pulling inside the greenery that surrounds the house

plenty of natural light. "Even on a grey day, it never feels dark and gloomy," says Tracy, who adds that her houseplants have "gone crazy" with all the sunlight they're getting.

Living the dream

Although Tracy has neighbours, the house retains a pleasing sense of privacy. Orienting the building in the right direction was a key factor, as well as incorporating clever pieces of glazing, such as the high-level letterbox-shaped window in the living area that frames the neighbour's trees but not their house. The well-considered planting will help, too; a row of pleached holly trees at the end of the garden will provide more screening as they mature.

"I've got the woodland to one side and the driveway is quite long, so it feels quite cut off and close to nature. It's very quiet and private. I love it," says Tracy. Beyond that, she adds that completing the project has given her a great sense of personal satisfaction, too. "I feel like I've really achieved something," she says. "I'm proud of it, and it does make me very happy."

closer look

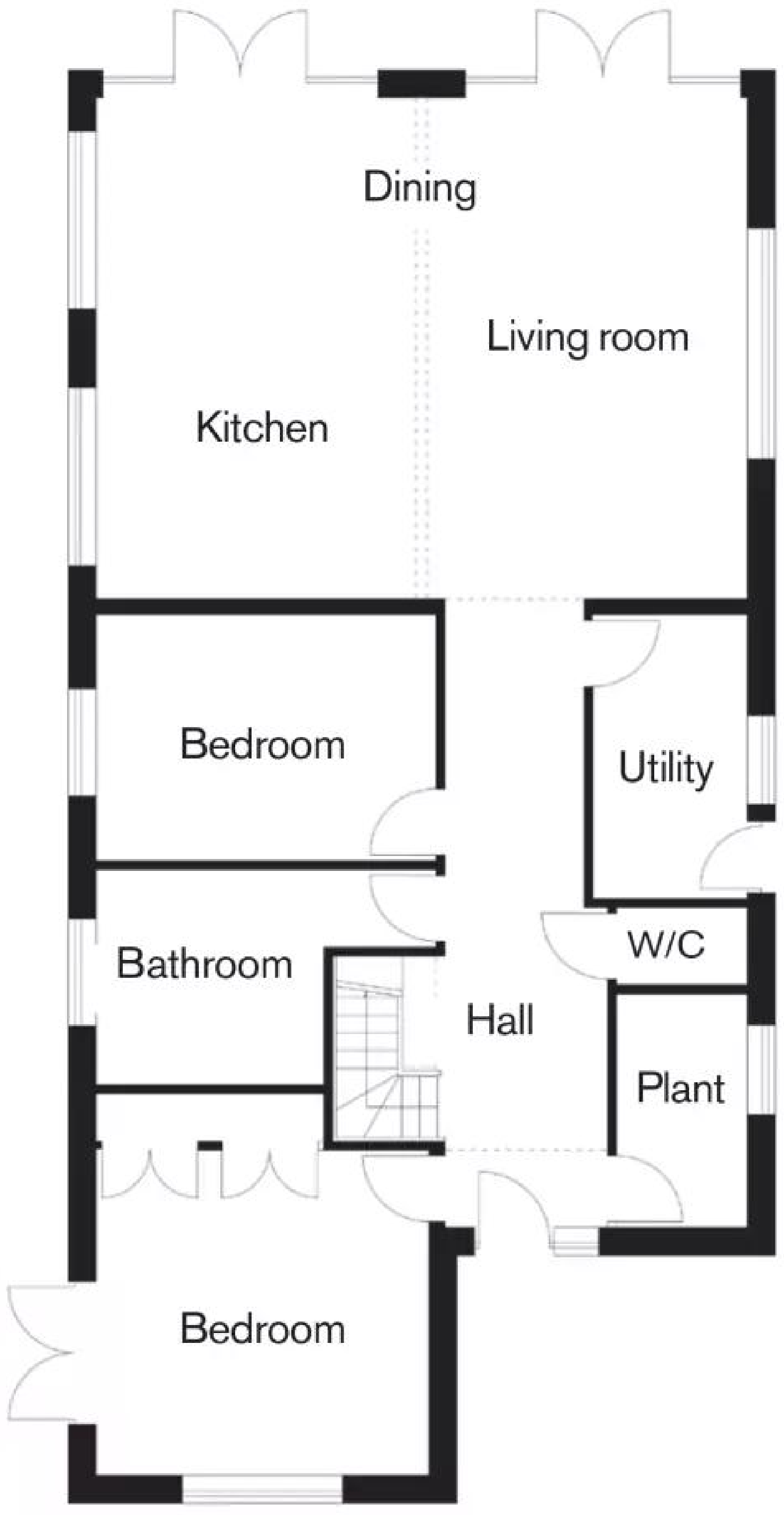
Mezzanine bedroom…

A mezzanine is a useful way to add more floor area in a home with double-height spaces that are open to the roof eaves – enabling the creation of extra rooms, while preserving an airy, open feel and maintaining a connection to the space below . It's a great option for home offices, play areas or anywhere you want to feel tucked away. Tracy uses hers as a bedroom, which works well as she lives alone, but noise and privacy considerations would be important in a family house. Blocking light out is also more challenging on a mezzanine, although Tracy doesn't mind the lack of window coverings in her own home. A glass balustrade, in the same style and materials as the staircase, makes the bedroom feel as open and spacious as possible. The lower part of the eaves has been partitioned off, making upright walls to place the furniture against while also creating low-level storage on one side and wardrobes on the other.

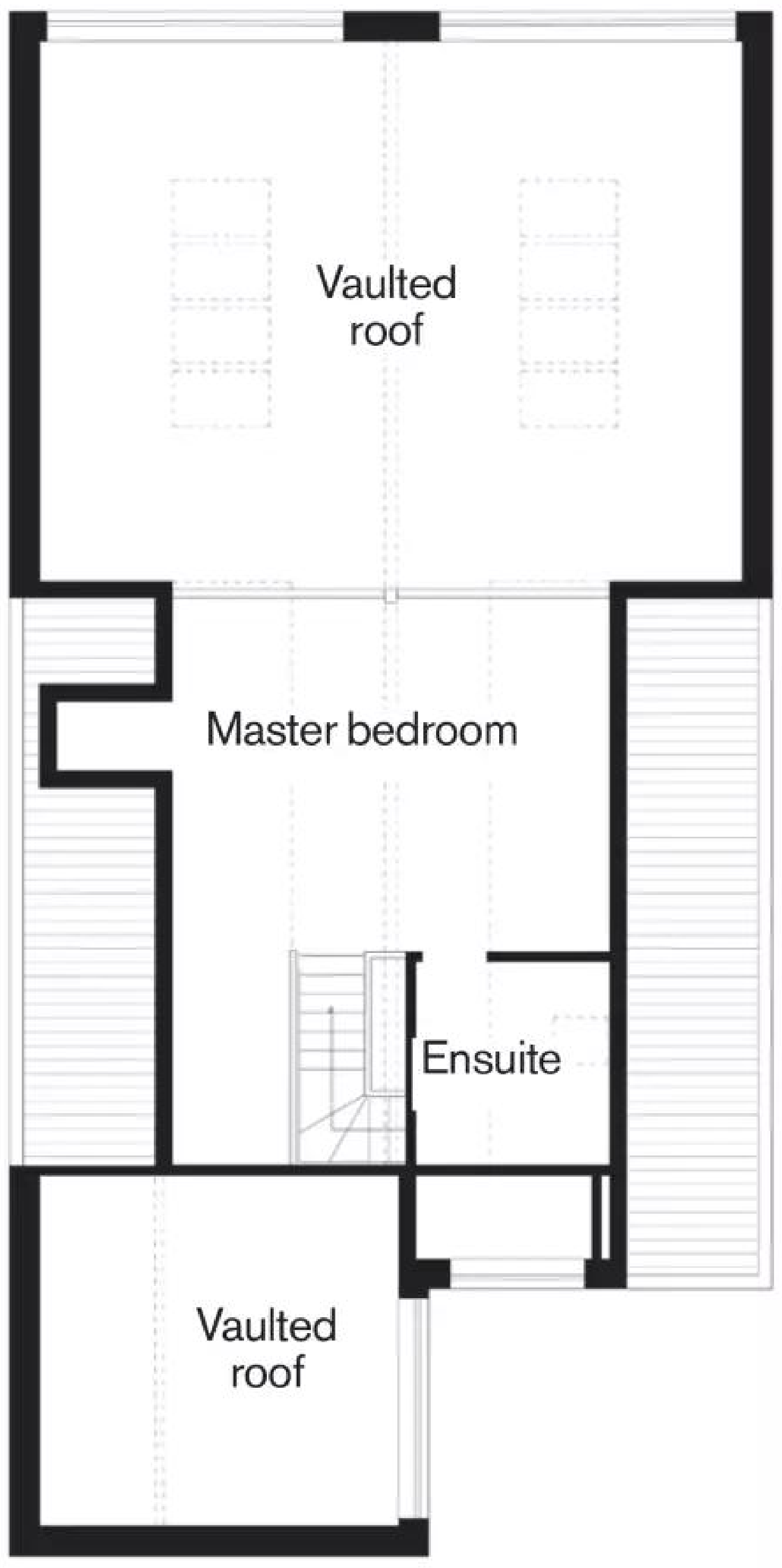
Master bedroom

Floor plans

Ground floor



First floor



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£431	14%	£72,892
Foundations	£269	9%	£45,478
External walls, roof & windows	£1,092	35%	£184,497
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£175	5%	£29,545
Joinery & fittings	£87	2%	£14,690
Plumbing & heating (incl bathroom & kitchen)	£399	13%	£67,368
Electrics	£83	3%	£13,981
Decorating	£116	4%	£19,545
Project management	£178	6%	£30,000
External works	£297	9%	£50,237
Grand total			**£528,233**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

DESIGN & TIMBER FRAME PACKAGE **Potton** 01767 676400 www.potton.co.uk TIMBER FRAME INSTALL & CARPENTRY **Almac Carpentry & Joinery** 07813 649633 PROJECT MANAGEMENT **3PM Construction** 07825 422946 BADGER SURVEY **Skilled Ecology Consultancy** 07747 477307 www.skilledecology.co.uk FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEM **CT Fire Protection** 01536 515872 www.ct-fireprotection.co.uk PLASTERING **N&S Harvey Plastering** 07545 242139 EXTERNAL WORKS & LANDSCAPING **Rutland Development & Construction** 07557 772798 FIBRE CEMENT CLADDING **James Hardie** 0121 311 3480 www.jameshardie.co.uk FRONT DOOR & GLAZING **Rationel** 01480 759511 www.rationel.co.uk LIGHTING **Tom Raffield** 01326 722725 www.tomraffield.com KITCHEN **Designs by Us** 01480 270517 www.designsbyus.co.uk FLOORING **Karndean** www.karndean.com BATHROOM TILES **Topps** 0800 783 6262 www.toppstiles.co.uk

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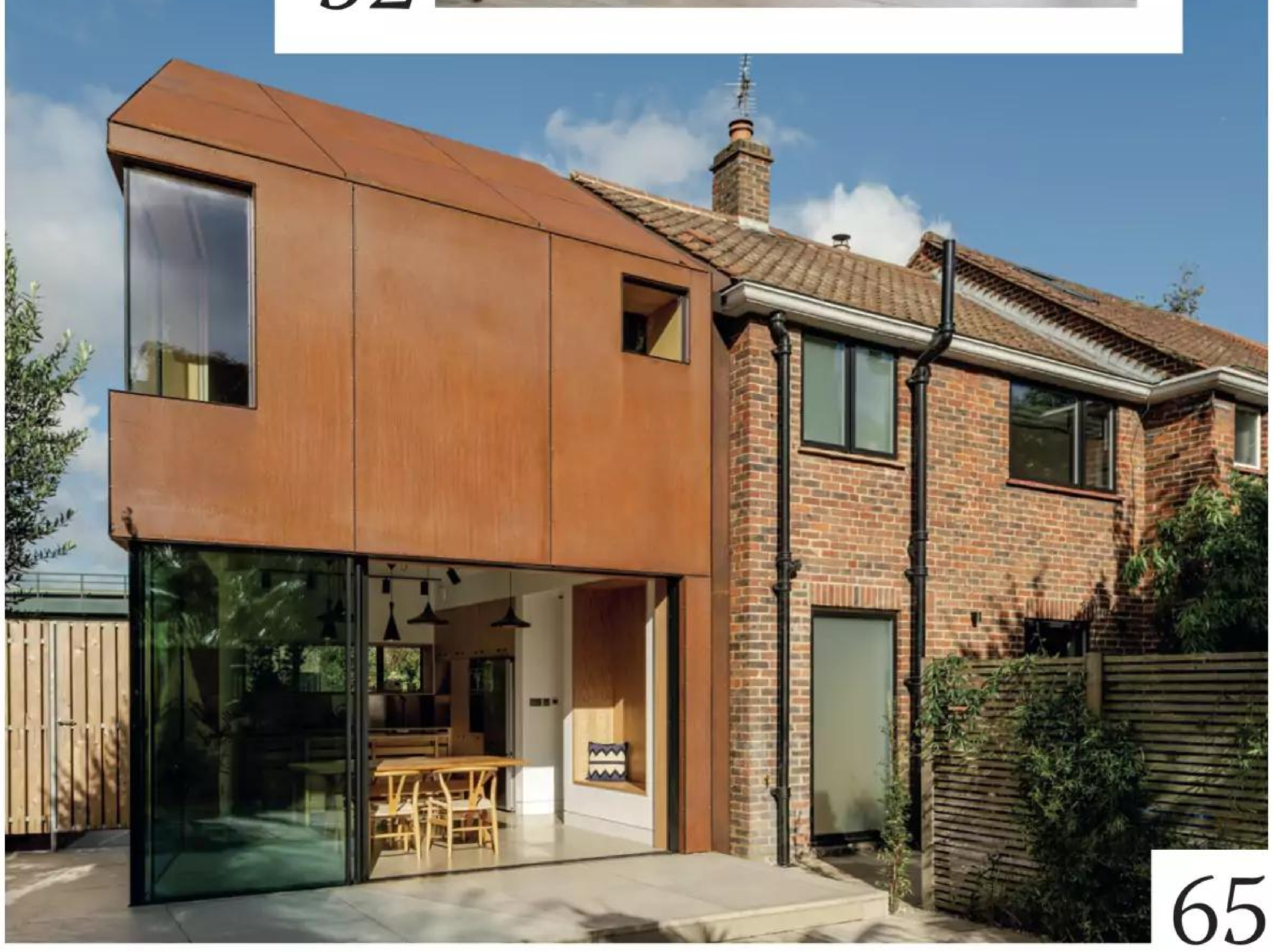
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Find out how you can create this type of ultra-efficient self build home

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From material selection to colour palettes, opening style and hardware choices, Erika Chaffey shares her tips for a practical and impressive design

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Explore some stunning units to add wow-factor to your kitchen and discover the best shape to suit your space

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Renovation expert Alan Tierney sets out how to know when your tiles need replacing and the costs associated

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Looking to extend your home but unsure on what configuration would work for you? Erika Chaffey's useful guide will help you decide

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WHAT IS A PASSIVHAUS?

TIMOTHY SOAR

Above: Pitched Passive House by RDA Architects is a groundbreaking transformation of a 1930s home in Dulwich, London. The certified Passivhaus balances heritage conservation with cutting-edge sustainability. It features a modular cross-laminated timber (CLT) structure, triple glazing, solar panels and an MVHR system. The home delivers outstanding energy efficiency, while blending Arts & Crafts with modernist design

This design and construction approach focuses on comfort and energy efficiency in both new builds and retrofit. Anna-Marie DeSouza explores how it works and what you need to know

Anyone interested in creating a low-impact, low-energy home will have heard the term Passivhaus – but what does it actually mean? And, if you're planning a bespoke house build, what do you need to know to meet the rigorous energy-efficiency goals? We take a closer look at this standard and its role in creating a sustainable project.

Q What does Passivhaus mean?

Passivhaus refers to buildings designed with exceptional energy efficiency to maintain a stable indoor temperature with minimal heating or cooling. Projects are highly insulated, airtight and equipped with controlled ventilation, allowing retention of passive heat from the sun and occupants, significantly reducing energy demand.

"Designing a Passivhaus follows a slightly different route to that of a standard home, with all the materials specifications carried out before the planning application stage, rather than after gaining approval," says Sam Grew, architectural assistant and certified Passivhaus consultant at Oakwrights. "The benefits are a wonderful living environment all year round, with a consistent temperature, no matter how hot or cold it is outside, enhanced noise reduction and very low energy bills."

QUICK GUIDE: PASSIVHAUS PERFORMANCE LEVELS

The Passivhaus standard was established in the 1990s, and since then has evolved beyond the well-known Passivhaus Classic model, introducing Passivhaus Plus and Passivhaus Premium, which integrate renewable energy generation into the certification.

The Passivhaus Institut developed these classes to align with global decarbonisation goals. Certification is determined using the Primary Energy Renewable (PER) methodology, which assesses total energy demand and renewable energy supply for a property over the course of a year. In brief, the three classifications are:

- **Passivhaus Classic** focuses on ultra-low energy demand, ensuring excellent insulation, airtightness and ventilation without requiring on-site energy generation.
- **Passivhaus Plus** takes efficiency further by requiring buildings to generate as much energy as they consume annually, typically through renewable sources, such as solar photovoltaic (PV) panels.
- **Passivhaus Premium** is the most ambitious, requiring buildings to generate far more energy than they use, making them net-positive energy producers.

Unlike some eco strategies that rely on renewable energy to offset environmental impact, Passivhaus focuses on minimising energy use from the outset. There is no single construction method for a Passivhaus, but there are key shared features. These buildings are

MARK BOLTON

Located in Worcestershire, this is the UK's first certified oak frame Passivhaus. Designed and constructed by Oakwrights, the oak frame is encased with Oakwrights' WrightWall and WrightRoof premium eco-insulated panel system. Passivhaus-quality sealing tapes were meticulously applied to optimise energy efficiency, while an MVHR system maintains fresh, temperature-controlled indoor air quality throughout the year

constructed with high levels of insulation and triple-glazed windows to reduce heat loss. They achieve up to 20 times higher airtightness than a standard home, preventing draughts and unnecessary energy waste. Another crucial element is mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR), which continuously supplies fresh air while conserving precious heat.

The concept was developed by the Passivhaus Institut in Germany, following research into why early low-energy buildings often failed to meet expected energy savings. The Institut offers certification, which typically costs around £1,500, for homes and buildings that meet the precise standards. While not all self builders choose to seek full certification, applying the core principles – ie reducing energy demand via airtightness and insulation – can still significantly enhance a home's performance.

Q What are the key principles behind Passivhaus design?

Achieving the Passivhaus standard involves several key factors that work together to create a highly efficient and comfortable home. One of the most important elements is accurate design modeling using the Passive House Planning Package (PHPP), which ensures that the building meets precise energy performance targets.

Insulation is a crucial component; you'll need quality materials correctly detailed and installed to minimise heat loss and maintain stable indoor temperatures. Windows and doors play a significant role, too, with high-performance triple glazing essential for preventing unwanted heat transfer and improving thermal efficiency. The building fabric must be extremely airtight, reducing draughts, while construction must be free of thermal bridges to eliminate areas where heat could escape.

As already mentioned, mechanical ventilation with heat recovery is an integral element. These systems continuously supply fresh air, while expelling stale, to ensure optimal indoor air quality – all while recycling heat to pre-warm the incoming supply. "MVHR is required due to the high energy efficiency of the building fabric and the level of airtightness," says Sam. "It also helps to ensure reduced CO2 levels, prevent indoor air stagnation and maintain healthy humidity levels, as well as filtering outdoor pollutants, such as particulates or allergens."

All that said, realising a Passivhaus isn't just about improving individual components, such as the U-values of the walling system or the depth of roof insulation. It demands a whole-house approach. "Building to Passivhaus standard is a holistic process that requires looking at everything from the floors, walls and roofs, through to windows, ventilation, energy demand and even potential for overheating," says architect Mark Finey of SEB+FIN. "On all Passivhaus projects, additional time must be allocated to model and test the proposal in software called the Passivhaus Planning Package (PHPP). This checks that the proposed design can meet the criteria, or as is often the way, informs refinements."

Q Do the benefits of Passivhaus outweigh the costs?

One of the most significant advantages of a Passivhaus is its exceptional energy efficiency, which leads to substantial savings on running costs compared to

Left: The Eco Summerhouse in Bristol, by Seb+Fin, is a masterclass in sustainable design, built to Passivhaus standards and blending modern style with eco materials. Constructed using an I-joist timber frame, filled with cellulose insulation (basically recycled newspaper), this home also features triple-glazed timber windows and MVHR. There's no traditional heating; instead, a discreet electric element within the MVHR tops up warmth as required, with a towel radiator offering a boost on the coldest days

Right: Quayside Passive House seamlessly integrates with its riverfront surroundings, combining brick, timber and zinc for a striking yet harmonious design. The energy-efficient home is built with Beattie's high-performance Passivhaus-build system, which features continuous insulation around the core of a timber frame structure. Designed by Habitat+ Architects, the project is a perfect blend of sustainability and architectural elegance

EXPERT VIEW

CHAYLEY COLLIS of the Passivhaus Trust clears us some common Passivhaus misconceptions

Can you open windows?
Yes! Occupants can always open the windows in a Passivhaus, although they will not need to in winter due to the excellent indoor air quality provided by the ventilation system.

Does Passivhaus restrict design choice?
Passivhaus does not dictate any particular construction system and can be adapted to any architectural aesthetic. A Passivhaus can be any size, shape or angle – but if you optimise orientation, glazing and form factor at an early design stage, it can certainly make it easier (and cheaper) to hit performance targets.

Is a Passivhaus complicated to live in?
No – living in a Passivhaus should be a fit-and-forget process, with the building fabric doing most of the work. In terms of maintenance, the filters in the MVHR system will need to be changed typically twice a year.

Is Passivhaus only about energy?
The Passivhaus standard specifically addresses operational energy, comfort and indoor air quality. Other issues can be considered alongside Passivhaus design, for example, choices regarding the embodied carbon of materials, biodiversity planning etc.

Are the benefits limited?
A quality assured, energy efficient, comfortable Passivhaus home brings with it a whole host of interconnected benefits. For example, it's bill-busting, giving residents energy security and protection from volatile energy prices.

In addition, it has uncompromised comfort, with even temperatures, constant fresh air supply and just the right indoor humidity level, too. This creates a healthy internal environment that can improve quality of life and deliver health benefits. It has a better building fabric that makes for a longer lasting home, and one that could be worth more if you come to sell on.

a standard home. By dramatically reducing energy consumption, homeowners benefit from lower heating and cooling demand, an especially important factor given the rising costs of gas and electricity.

"Passivhaus is one of the most rigorous certifications. It is a tried-and-tested way to deliver low-energy buildings that provide healthy and comfortable environments year-round," says Mark. "However, the added complexity comes at a cost, which homeowners must factor into their budget." Areas likely to see extra costs include insulation, MVHR units, airtightness measures, PHPP design and certification fees. "Figures vary, but the Passivhaus Institut estimates that building to this standard can cost approximately 15%-20% more than a conventional project," says Mark. That sounds right for high-quality bespoke homes with unique details, but simpler designs or those built at scale might see an 8%-10% increase.

While upfront costs may be higher, the long-term benefits are undeniable. Thanks to its ultra-efficient design, a Passivhaus recoups the initial investment over time through drastically reduced energy bills. Plus, the PHPP process means the performance gap, where buildings fail to deliver their predicted energy efficiency, is virtually eliminated, so homeowners experience the savings they were promised from the outset.

"Residential buildings produce about 20% of the UK's carbon emissions, so decarbonising our housing stock is a crucial step towards meeting net-zero targets," says Mark. "Passivhaus provides a proven, effective approach, making it a highly efficient and sustainable building standard."

Below: Anchorage Passivhaus is a prefabricated home with an impressive airtightness of 0.44 air changes per hour, and consumes just 7.4kWh/m² of energy per year. A key performance element is the Zehnder Q350 MVHR system. Designed, supplied, installed and commissioned by Total Home Environment, it recovers up to 95% of indoor heat

Q Does Passivhaus work for home renovations?

It's a common assumption that Passivhaus only refers to new builds, but it's possible to apply the principles to existing homes. The EnerPHit (Passivhaus retrofit) standard takes an existing building's constraints, such as orientation and glazing, into account. It's therefore slightly more lenient than the full Passivhaus requirements, although it still demands a rigorous approach. "New projects are slightly easier as the building is designed to comply from scratch," says Mark. "This means orientation, incorporating lots of insulation, suitably-sized glazing, plant and airtightness measures are included from the start."

A Passivhaus retrofit could be the ideal opportunity for someone who wants to futureproof their current home, reduce energy costs and significantly lower their ongoing carbon footprint. "The main challenge around retrofitting is the type of building. It is more challenging to upgrade a terraced or semi-detached property, as you are unable to externally retrofit all four walls, so thermal bridges inevitably occur," says Isabel Badger, director at Beattie. "Whilst it is possible to retrofit these types of buildings with a mixture of internal and external measures, a detached house has greater potential for improving thermal performance."

One way to simplify the process for a standalone property is literally wrap it in insulation. "Our TCosy system builds off the original structure, so there are significant cost savings in terms of groundworks and existing drainage," says Isabel. "There is a shortage of great self build plots in some areas, so this type of retrofit provides the ideal solution to transform an existing house, set in a nice plot, into a super energy-efficient home."

CONTACTS **Beattie** 0333 335 6494 www.beattie.io **Frame Technologies** 01544 267124 www.frametechnologies.co.uk **Oakwrights** 01252 794325 www.oakwrights.com **RDA Architects** 020 8299 2222 www.rdauk.com **SEB+FIN Architects** 020 3332 0101 www.sebandfin.com **Passivhaus Trust** 0333 050 8271 www.passivhaustrust.org.uk **Total Home Environment** 0345 260 0123 www.totalhome.co.uk

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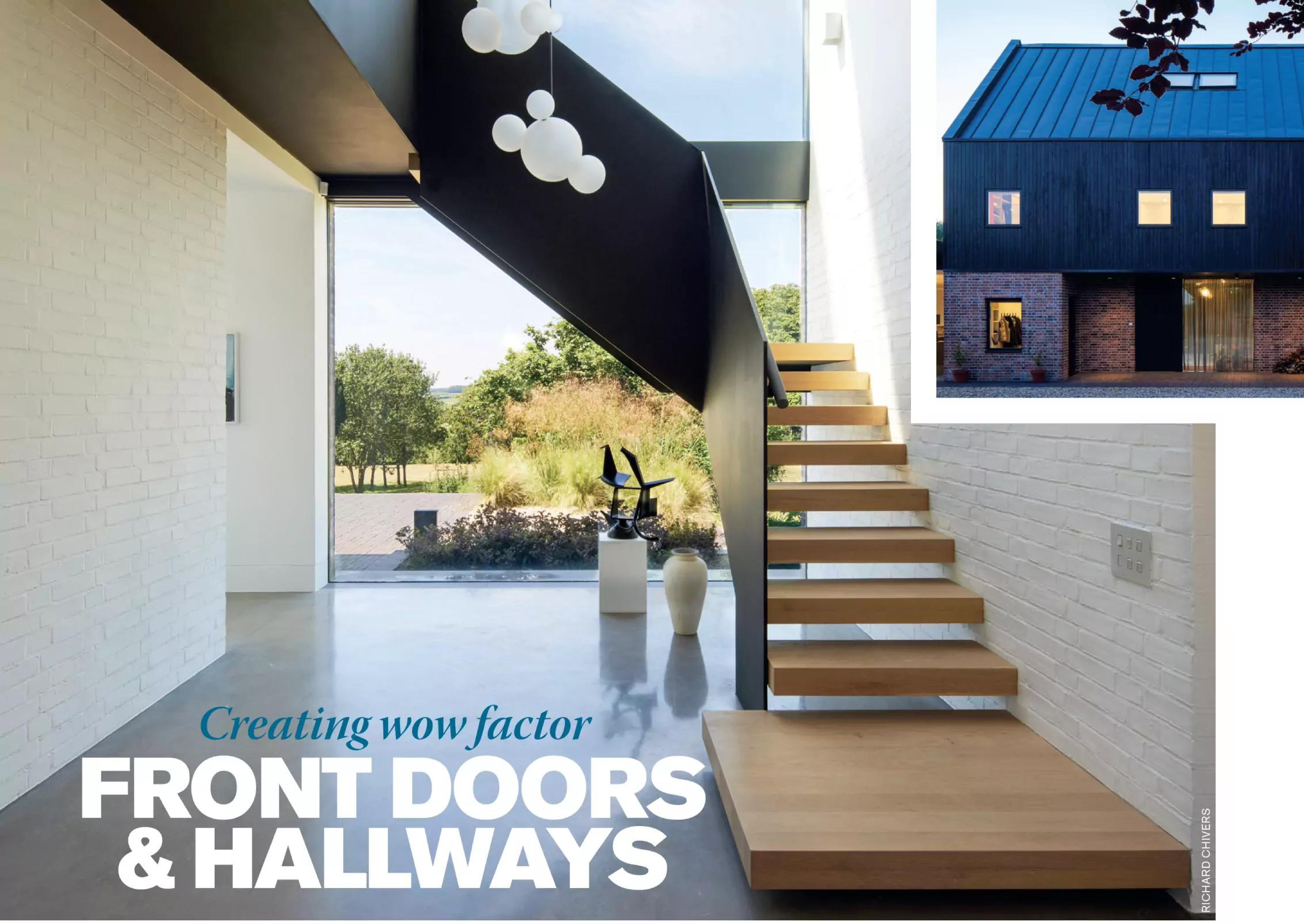

RICHARD CHIVERS

Creating wow factor

FRONT DOORS & HALLWAYS

Looking to make an impact with your home's entryway? Erika Chaffey shares the key considerations and top design tips for a functional and eye-catching design

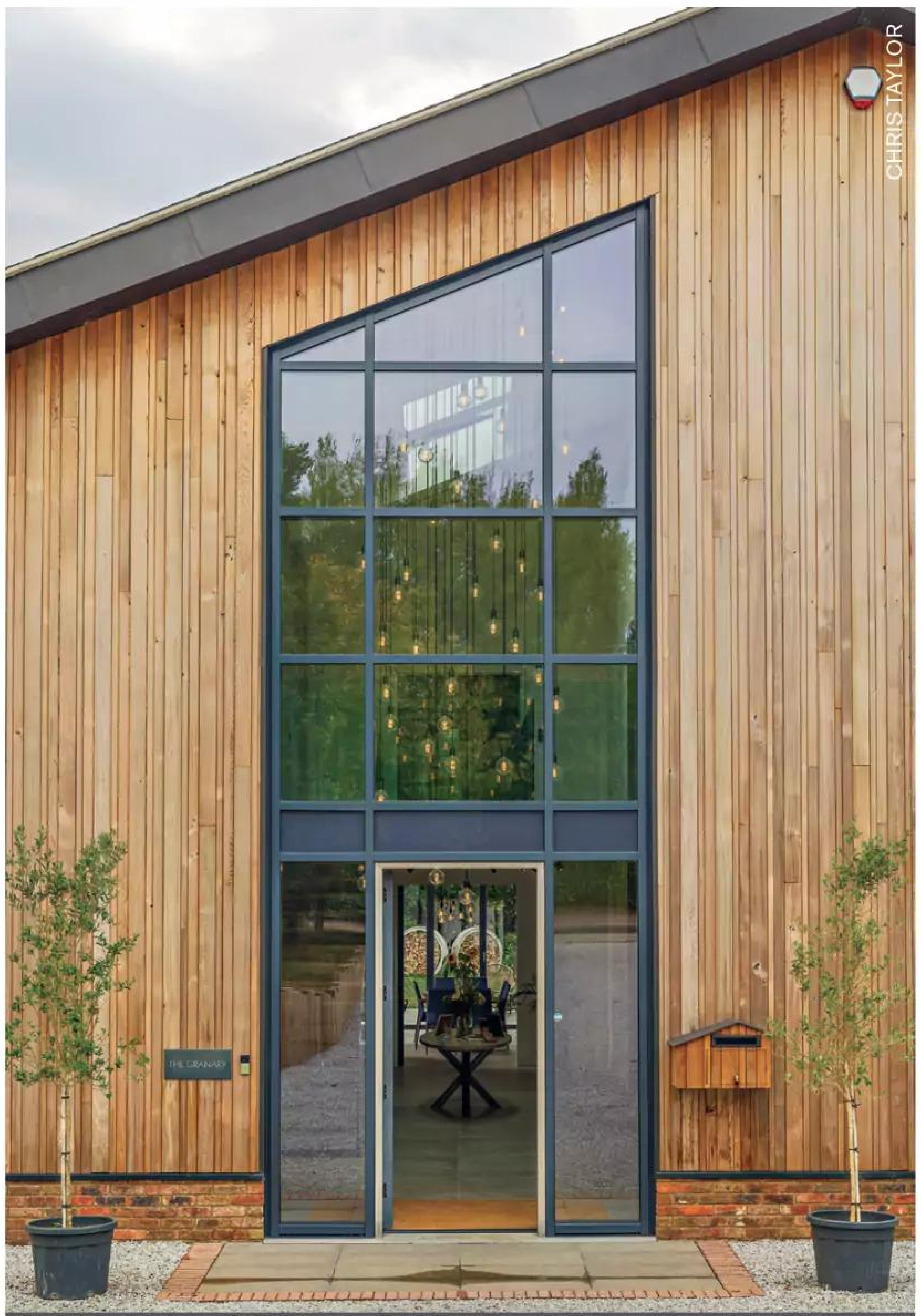
Above & inset: Designed by Mylius Architects, the sleek timber staircase is the focal point of this contemporary home. North-facing glazing extends all the way up to the pitched roof, flooding the hallway with natural light. A blackened steel stringer and polished concrete floor contrast beautifully with the warm, solid oak stair treads and painted brickwork. Externally, an overhang provides protection from the elements

Your entrance is more than just a doorway; it's the first impression that you, your guests and even passersby will have of your home. Plus, it marks a key transition between the outside world and your personal space. A well-designed entryway balances aesthetics and function, providing a welcoming atmosphere while addressing practical needs like storage, lighting and privacy. "Ultimately, the right approach depends on the context of your home and the experience you want to create," says Jim Cattle, architect and associate director at Snell David Architects. "Whether it's a grand glass entryway or subtle detailing, well-placed design choices can make all the difference."

Investing time in the early planning stages, seeking expert advice and considering long-term usability will help you strike the ideal balance between practicality and style. Here, I'm guiding you through the core considerations for creating your ideal front door and hallway design, plus how to make a lasting impression.

Planning your setup

Achieving a high-quality entrance design begins with careful planning. Whether you're after a grand hallway


CHRIS TAYLOR

This barn conversion in Buckinghamshire features IDSystems' aluminium Hoveton front door in gun metal grey textured DB703, installed within a triple-height glass curtain walling frame to fill the core of the home with light

or a compact entryway, considering sightlines, storage and layout from the outset will ensure a space that feels both cohesive and functional. "Planning should start as early as possible when the building is being designed," says Elizabeth Assaf, co-founder and designer at Urban Front. "A lot of our clients come to us about the front door once the plans are finished and, by then, it's often too late to increase the size of the opening or make any significant structural changes required to accommodate the design they're after."

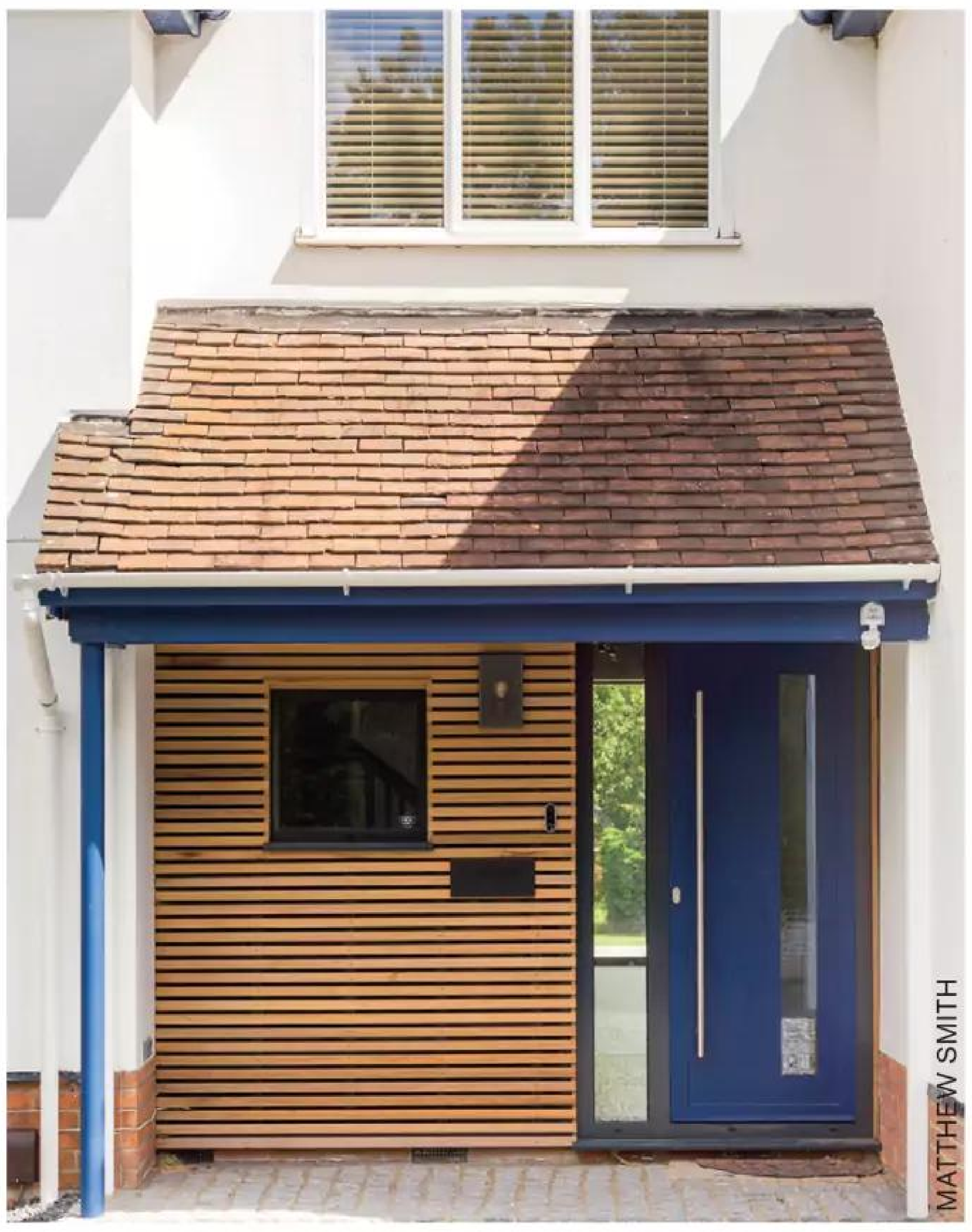
A well-thought-out setup can help to guide the eye and create a sense of flow. "If possible, plan in a long view from the hallway – this could be through to the principal room of the house or perhaps even to the garden beyond," says Nicky Mylius, architect at Mylius Architects. "This helps to create a sense of space and provides visual cues to the sequences of your rooms."

A good layout will enable you to take advantage of the best sightlines, while early planning will ensure your space includes all of the necessary practical features, too. "Start with the size of the room and what needs to go in it," says Elizabeth. "If storage is essential, plan that first, followed by the staircase placement, door locations and lighting setup." For small entrances, mirrors and glazing can enhance the feeling of space. Clever storage solutions, like built-in cabinetry, multi-functional furniture and discreet coat nooks, can prevent clutter while maintaining the look you want. "Storage solutions should be integrated seamlessly, balancing practicality with aesthetics," says Jim.

Design & materials

Selecting the right front door style and entryway finishes plays a vital role in setting the tone for your home. Factors such as size, proportion and materials should align with both your property's architecture and practical needs. "The size of your door is usually governed by the shape and layout of your home's facade," says Edward Stobart, technical sales manager at IDSystems. "It's always worth seeking planning advice from your local authority on what will be possible externally, especially in conservation areas."

Whether you're self building or renovating, a striking front door can serve as an impactful focal point – but it should always align with your home's overall aesthetic. "It is possible to put contemporary doors on traditional buildings, but the style should be complementary rather than distracting," says Elizabeth. "A stark design with too much stainless steel, for instance, might feel out of place."

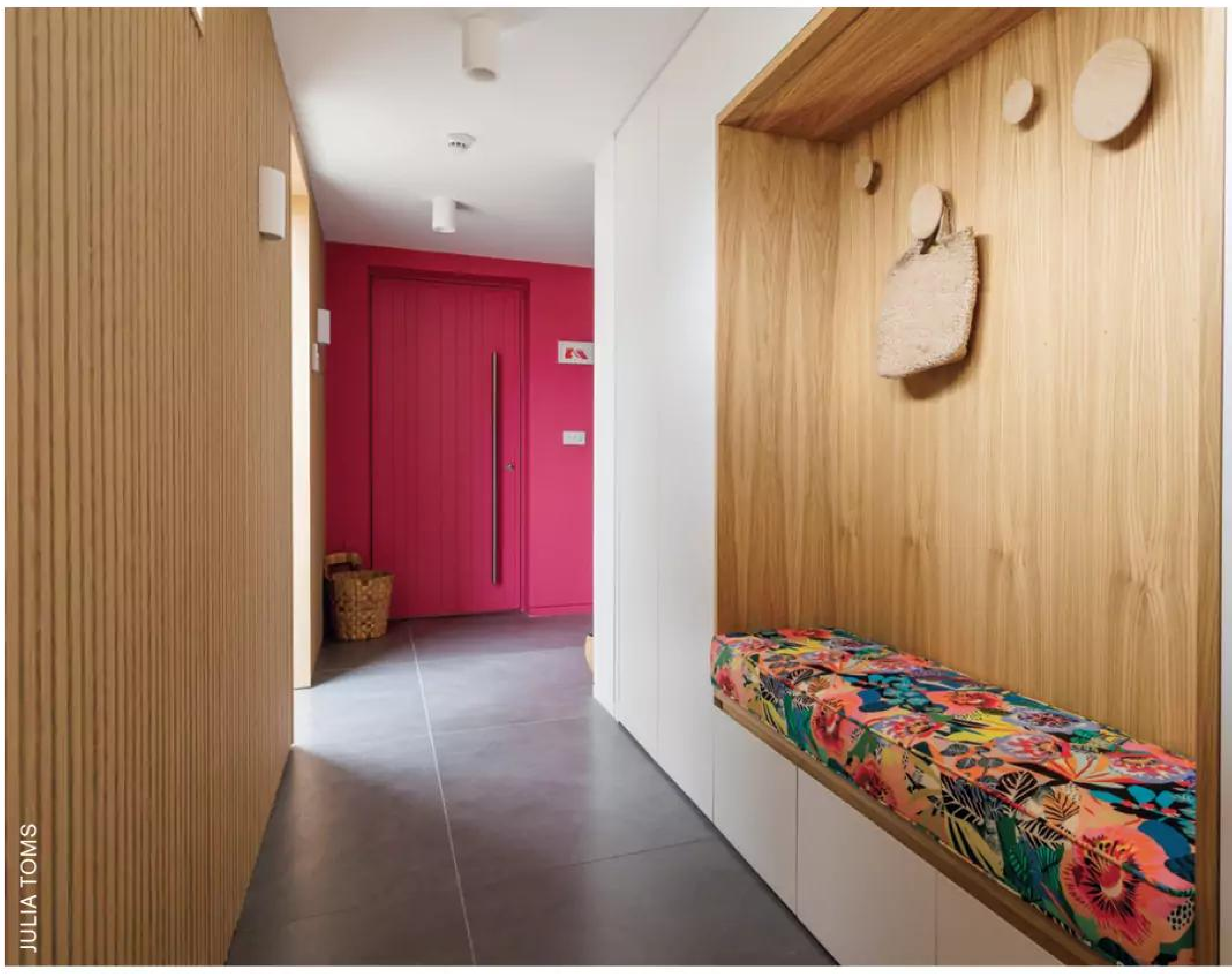


MATTHEW SMITH

Left: Horizontally laid timber cladding with a shadow gap is paired with IDSystems' aluminium Houghton door in eye-catching sapphire blue (RAL 5003). The rainwater goods have been colour matched to create a coordinated aesthetic

Internally, durable materials like engineered timber, terrazzo, or stone are great solutions for withstanding high foot traffic while creating a timeless, polished finish. "Often hallways can feel rather cold or echoey, so it's worth thinking about softer textures and additional features that will absorb sound and visually cushion the space," says Nicky.

For homes with planning restrictions, certain materials and styles may be required to maintain neighbourhood uniformity. However, subtle contemporary touches, like modern lighting, clever use of traditional materials or a refined colour palette, can introduce character while meeting regulations. "To create a cohesive look, the entrance should harmonise with the overall architectural language of your surroundings and the rest of your home," says Jim. "This doesn't mean strict uniformity. It can be a bold feature, but materials, detailing and scale should feel intentional and complementary rather than jarring."



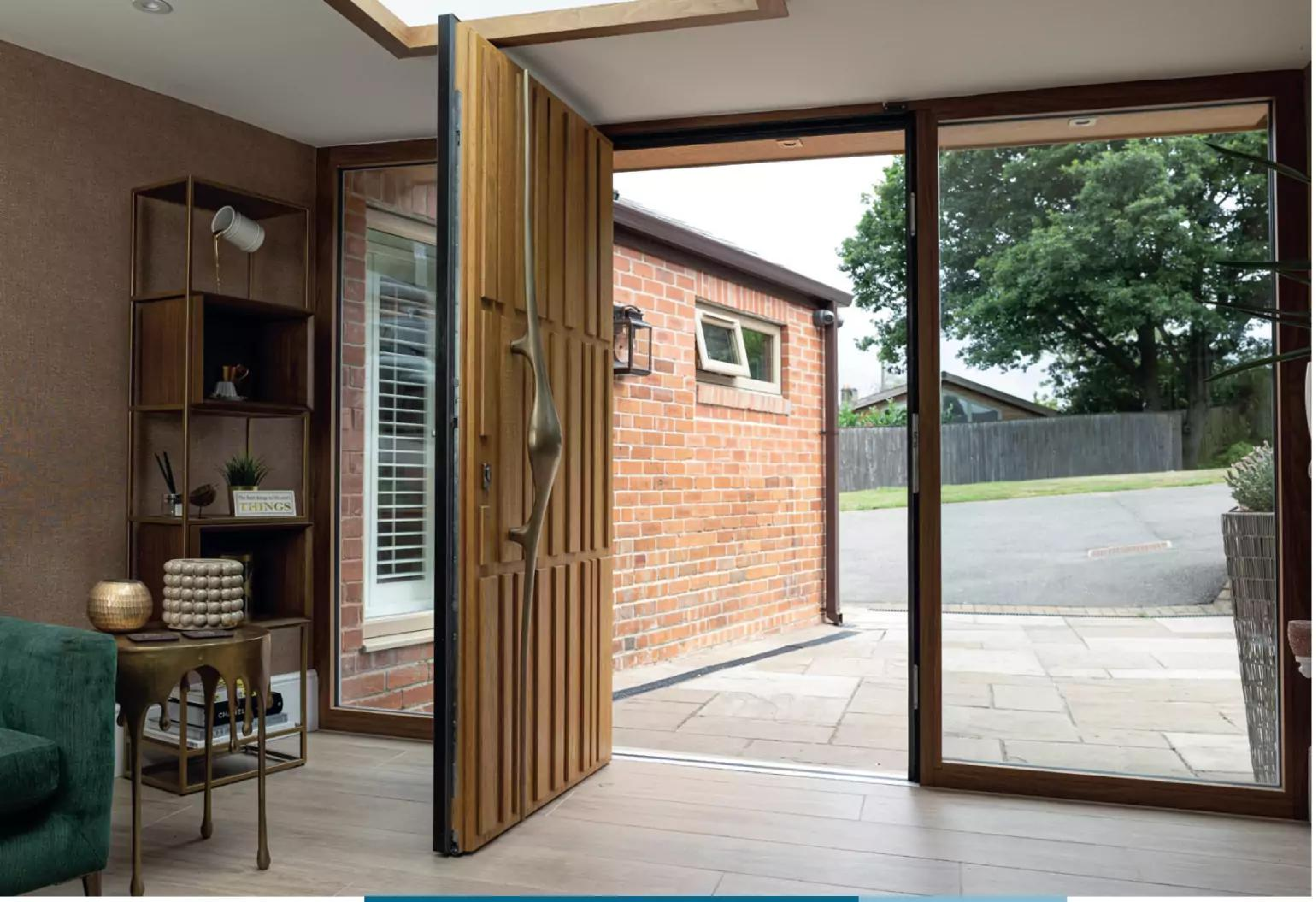
JULIA TOMS

Above: This clever hallway setup features a striking entrance door from Urban Front, paired with a hot pink accent wall to contrast beautifully with the warm timber panels. Discreet storage is hidden within the walls, plus a handy inset bench provides daily functionality

Incorporating glazing

Natural light can transform an entrance, making it feel spacious, warm and inviting. Modern house design has embraced glazing, with larger entrance halls and double-height ceilings becoming increasingly popular. "If you have the space, adding fixed-frame sidelight windows around your main door helps draw natural light into the room," says Edward. "Alternatively, you could opt for a fully glazed front door."

Balancing light with privacy is vital. Obscured or privacy glass, sandblasted glazing, or ridged sidelights allow light to flow through your space, while maintaining discretion. A fully glazed entrance, such as a glass gable, creates a striking, light-filled experience, but it may require additional shading and privacy solutions, depending on your location and preferences. "Timber or metal slats allow light to filter through while offering



Above: This beautiful, bespoke Tavole front door by Deuren – pictured in a rich honey oak – features an irregular linear pattern that makes a striking statement. Glazed panels on either side flood the hallway with sunshine

clear views out from the inside and limiting visibility from the street," says Jim. "Frosted or reeded glass and high-level openings are also great solutions for maintaining privacy without sacrificing daylight." In smaller homes or modest entryways, slim windows above your front door or to one side can be equally as effective for framing a view, allowing access to sunlight and maximising privacy.

Adding wow factor

Your front door and hallway setup can be an opportunity to showcase your personal style and make a unique statement. Key design elements, such as staircases, artificial lighting, colour choices and landscaping, can elevate an entryway from a purely functional space to an area you look forward to coming home to. "Hallways that allow you to see all the way through the house and out into the back garden have become hugely popular," says Edward. "Not only do they draw light deeper into the floorplan, but they also increase the connection between inside and out."

Material continuity is another effective design choice. "We see lots of buildings where the exterior materials are extended into the hallway," says Elizabeth. "Porcelain, stone, bronze touches or Corten steel create a seamless transition and striking visual impact."

Statement staircases, oversized pendant lights and bold architectural features can further enhance the space. "To create an unforgettable zone, the key is combining elegance with functional design," says Jim. "Large, open entry halls can be transformed with statement ceilings, whether through dramatic height or striking materials, drawing the eye upwards and adding a sense of grandeur."

External porches or overhangs provide a welcoming touch while offering protection from the elements. "These can be paired with thoughtful landscaping, from sculptural trees to carefully designed pathways, directing attention to the entrance and creating a seamless flow between the outdoors and your home," Jim continues.

Colour can also be a powerful tool. An eye-catching front door or accent wall in the hallway adds instant charm and character. "Sometimes a bold pop of colour is needed to complete your design, other times something more natural or neutral that blends seamlessly with your surroundings is more effective," says Nicky.

Lighting plays a crucial role in defining the ambience. "Statement pendants or hidden LED strips can highlight architectural details and create a dynamic atmosphere," says Jim. "Lighting can be both practical and artistic, setting the mood as you enter the home."

Consider how furniture and artwork set the tone for the rest of your home. A striking console table, a well-placed mirror, or a curated art collection in the entryway can act as a visual preview of the rooms beyond. For self builds, planning your interior scheme alongside the structural design of your home will help ensure seamless integration and continuity throughout the property.

TOP TIPS FRONT DOOR DESIGN

1 MATERIALS Timber, aluminium, composite and PVCu are some of the most common material options, each with their own unique features and benefits. Whichever you go for, look for products that offer excellent insulation, good weathertightness and warranty-backed finishes.

2 GO BIG An oversized entrance door can help to create an inviting entryway that makes your home look and feel spacious. Consider both the width and height for a dramatic effect.

3 USE COLOUR & TEXTURE A burst of colour and interesting finishes are great ways to inject character and make your entrance stand out. Contrasting shades, a metal accent, wood graining, etched features, or ridging and panelling are fantastic solutions for a creative door design.

4 CONSIDER OPENING STYLE For instance, you could upgrade your entrance with a striking pivot opening. Rotating around a vertical axis, pivot doors add design flair and individuality. Plus, they don't require a conventional frame. Alternatively, you could opt to double up with two side-hinged front doors for a grand and luxurious look that provides easy access.

5 HARDWARE CHOICES Stylish and practical handles, locks, letter boxes and house numbers can help to elevate your setup. Supersize your hardware, use the same colour as the door for a sleek look, or choose a high-end handle in solid bronze for a touch of opulence.

CONTACTS **Deuren** 0800 138 6688 www.deuren.co.uk **Hormann** 020 8302 6627 www.hormann.co.uk **IDSystems** 01603 408804 www.idsystems.co.uk **Kloeber** 01487 740044 www.kloeber.co.uk **Mylius Architects** 07971 671533 www.myliusarchitects.co.uk **Origin** 0808 239 9454 www.origin-global.com **RK Door Systems** 01992 878839 www.rkdoorsystems.co.uk **Snell David Architects** 020 8870 3335 www.snell-david.co.uk **Urban Front** 01494 778787 www.urbanfront.com

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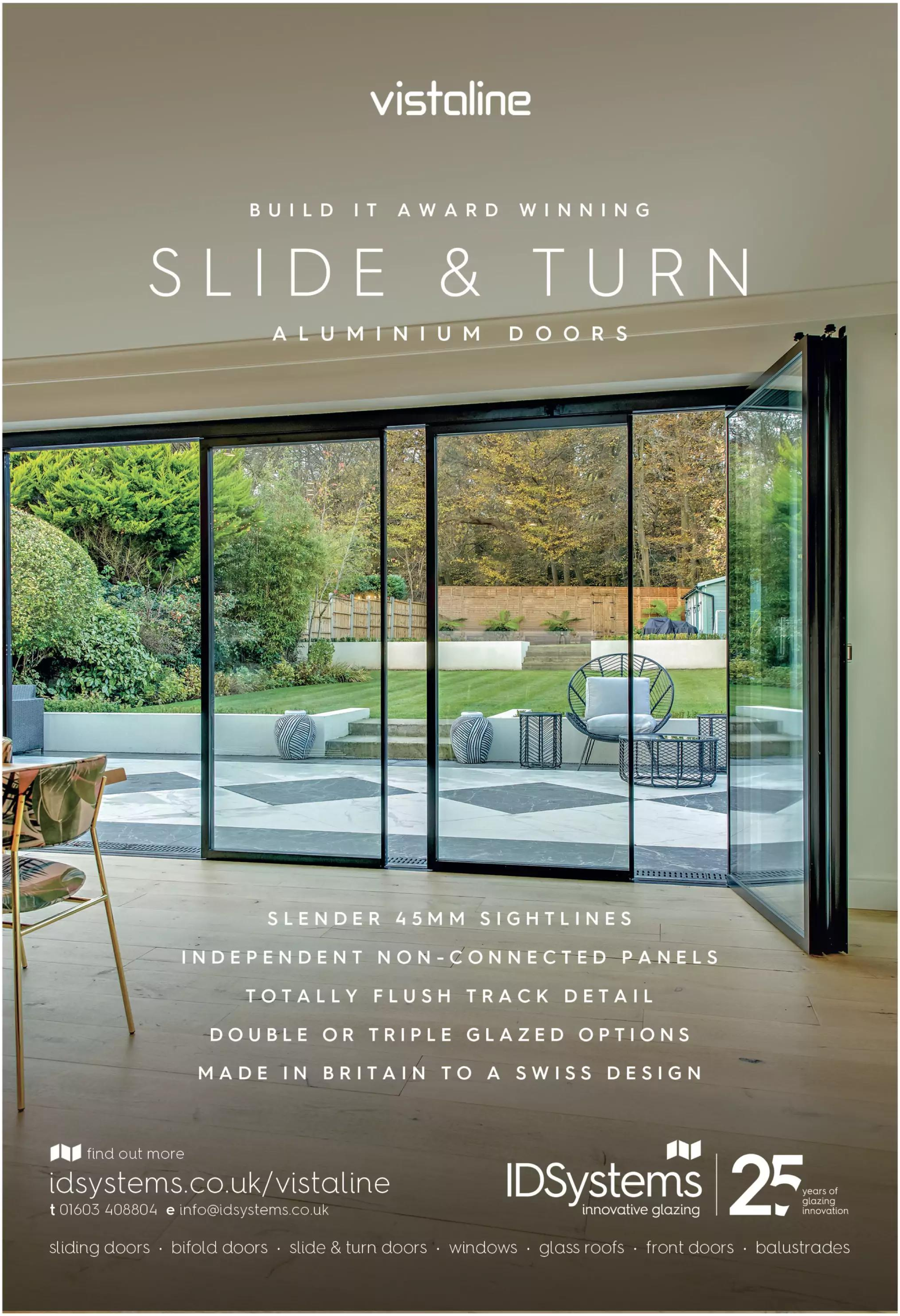

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GUIDE TO KITCHEN ISLANDS

A well-designed centrepiece enhances both style and practicality. **Scarlett Deamer** explores the key factors to consider when planning your layout

Above & right: Masterclass Kitchens (www.masterlass kitchens.co.uk) designed a space with ample storage, high-quality finishes, and smooth circulation to suit the owners' lifestyle. A dedicated bar stool area was built into the centrepiece. creating extra dining and socialising spots

An island is a much-desired feature for contemporary kitchens, and highly coveted by homebuyers, often boosting a property's value. As well as providing supplementary workspace and storage, it can also be a relaxing backdrop for entertaining guests and a stunning wow-factor centrepiece for your house. Read our advice to help you decide if an island would work for your kitchen design.

Planning your layout

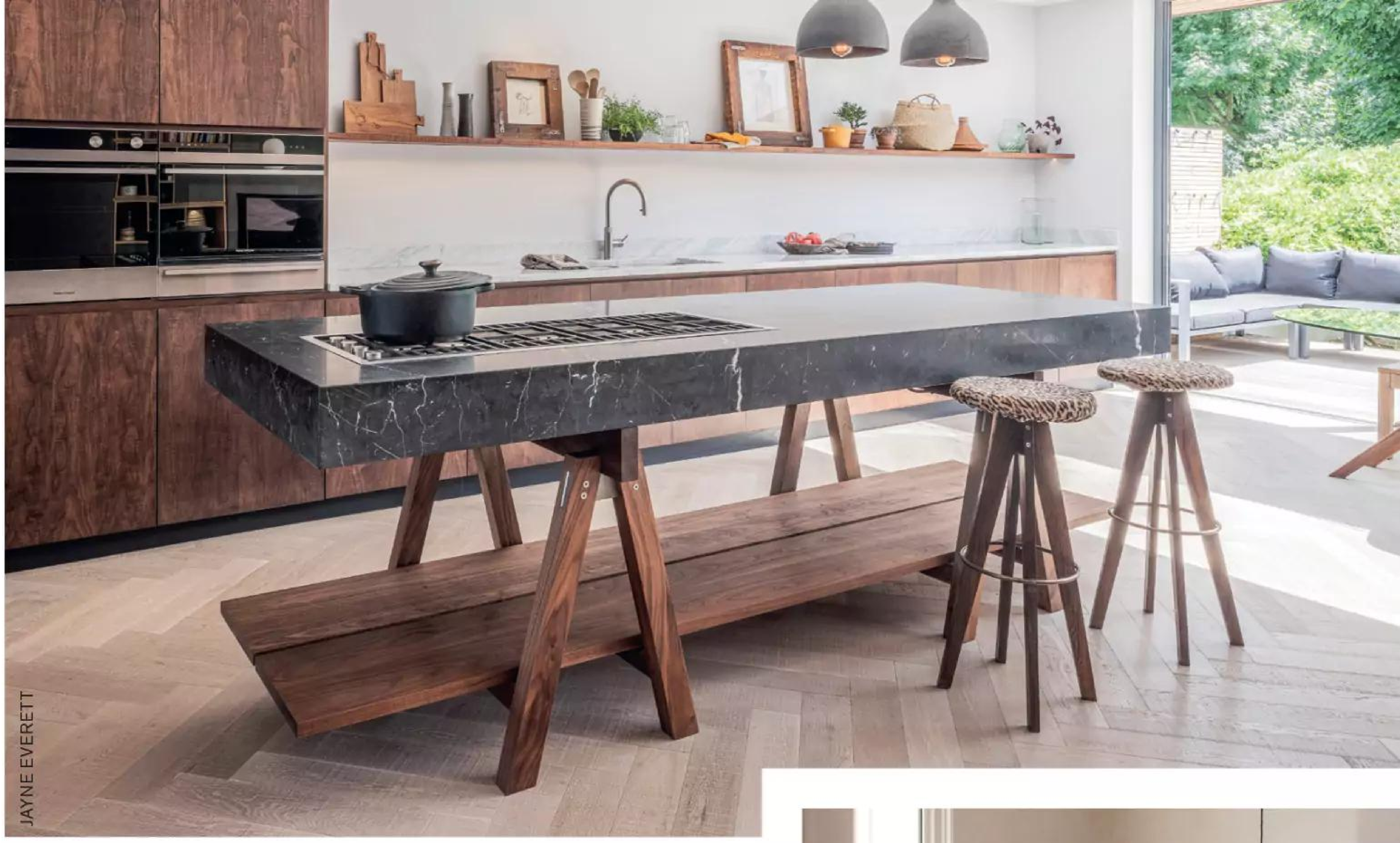
When exploring the feasibility of a kitchen island, there are some practical considerations to keep in mind. As a general rule, you'll want at least 1m between fixed perimeter cabinets and an island to ensure there is enough room to move around the kitchen comfortably. Size matters, too: an island unit smaller than 2m x 1m may not provide enough workspace or storage to make it a practical, cost-effective choice. So don't try to shoehorn one in if it doesn't fit with the overall design.

Next, think about your lifestyle and how an island would meet your requirements. For example, do you enjoy entertaining guests, cooking elaborate recipes or want the space to double as a makeshift work from home desk? How you intend on using your kitchen will impact the appliances and features that you want to include in the design. Planning space for sinks, ovens and hobs is imperative to make sure the room and island work for you. Depending on how you kit it out, plumbing, electrics and gas connections may all be required in your island – and this should be looked at from the start, not left to the end when integrating the infrastructure will be much more invasive and therefore more expensive.

Lighting is another facet of the design that needs to be considered when planning your unit. Overhead pendant lighting can add some character to the setting and invitingly illuminates dining and cooking areas with a soft hue. If you are looking for something with a bit of wow factor to really make a statement, but don't want it to cost a fortune, LED strip lights can be rebated into the underside of worktops to create a cosy glow. You can also experiment with dimmer switches or sensor lighting to create the ideal ambience for your lifestyle.

Understanding costs

With prices ranging from around £250 for workbench-style units to over £11,500 for high-end bespoke designs


JAYNE EVERETT

with built-in appliances, islands come in a wide variety of options to suit different budgets. Kitchen specialists, Magnet have noted that the average spend on a new unit is around £5,276, with self builders dedicating around 21% of their total kitchen budget to the island.

Your unit will normally be part of your new kitchen fit-out, therefore many of the cost implications relate to the overall room's design and construction. When planning the space, hiring an architect or designer typically comes with higher fees. Designing it yourself or using in-store services from retailers like IKEA or Wren can be a more budget-friendly alternative. A professional will be able to apply their specialist knowledge and extensive experience to help you create a functional and attractive unit, while the cheaper route will only be effective if you are clear on your wants and needs for the space and your preferred aesthetic. The same goes for the construction method, as a prefabricated system will be a low-cost alternative to a bespoke design, but you will need to do a little bit more research to make sure you find one that fits your requirements.

The number of appliances, plumbing necessities and your chosen lighting options will also impact the price. If you have chosen to go for a statement feature such as a waterfall worktop or some striking under the counter lighting, the price of these will also be affected by the material you choose and who installs them.

If you're a seasoned DIYer, you might be able to fit the kitchen island units and certain types of worktop yourself. However, anything that involves plumbing and electrics is best left in the hands of the pros to ensure a safe, Building Regs-compliant install. Similarly, if you're dealing with luxury materials or a complex design, the reassurance of using an experienced fitter who will come back to fix any faults is likely to be well worth the money.

Multi-functional space

One of the biggest advantages of a kitchen island is its versatility. By incorporating additional seating, whether bar stools or a dedicated dining area, you can enhance its functionality. It can serve as a casual dining spot, a place to study for school or work remotely, or even a creative hub for messy arts and crafts on a rainy weekend.

Designing an interesting split-level island can also help ensure uncongested circulation for users and help define different zones. Mixed worktop heights can be used to create a natural transition through your kitchen into the living areas, or from cooking to dining spaces. This type of layout works well for properties with smaller floorplans that might not have room for a separate table in a kitchen-diner. This unique style is sure to add some flavour to your interiors, as it's a clever twist on the classic island design.

WHERE SHOULD MY ISLAND GO?

The island should not obstruct any movement, allowing you and your guests to circulate around the space freely. Below are some common kitchen configurations and advice on where to place your island.

U-SHAPED KITCHEN Place the island in the centre of the U to create a natural flow around the area.

SINGLE WALL GALLEY The island should be positioned facing the cupboard area, so everything you need for cooking is in close proximity.

L-SHAPED KITCHEN An island will help create a clear distinction between the kitchen and the other space adjacent to it, so try placing it at the end of the run or in the middle of the open-plan zone.

Is it right for me?

If your kitchen is fairly small, you're on a tight budget or you need to prioritise working space above culinary uses, a traditional island may not be the right choice for your self build project – but this doesn't mean that there aren't some great alternative options to consider.

A peninsula, a countertop extension attached on one side, is a great solution for smaller kitchens. It adds extra counterspace without extending too far into the floor plan and taking up vital room. This configuration lends itself to becoming a breakfast bar, too, making an ideal spot for family meals. Plus, it also helps to break up a room, creating a partition between kitchen and living spaces.

Small wooden prep tables or butcher's blocks are also becoming increasingly popular for their rustic look and ability to be moved as and when required. This can also be a more affordable option, as you can repurpose a suitable piece of furniture into a functional worktop with built-in storage, then upcycle it to match your style. A small freestanding unit is also movable, allowing you to easily add it to the end of your regular dining table to accommodate some extra guests, or even place it outside when hosting a relaxing summer barbecue with the whole extended family.

ELLEI HOME

Top: Built from solid walnut with a single slab Nero Marquina marble top, this minimalist design by Naked Kitchens (www.nakedkitchens.com) gives an airy feel to the kitchen. The exposed lower shelf allows you to showcase your kitchenware. Prices start from £6,000

Above: Crafted from sustainably-sourced wood, with honed marble and classic brass caster details, deVOL's (www.devolkitchens.co.uk) elegant island allows owners to rearrange their space as they need

KITCHEN ISLAND GALLERY »

design details

Kitchen island

NICK SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY

WATERFALL WORKTOP

Create a luxurious feature by incorporating a waterfall edge to your kitchen island. This dramatic worktop, designed by Callerton, mirrors the sleek cashmere-coloured palette used throughout the kitchen, tying the island into the overall aesthetic. By choosing a stone with prominent veining, the material visually makes the surface feel continuous. The statement finish not only extends the countertop space and creates a striking focal point, but also offers the opportunity for additional seating to be discreetly nested underneath. (www.callerton.co.uk)

SIDE BY SIDE

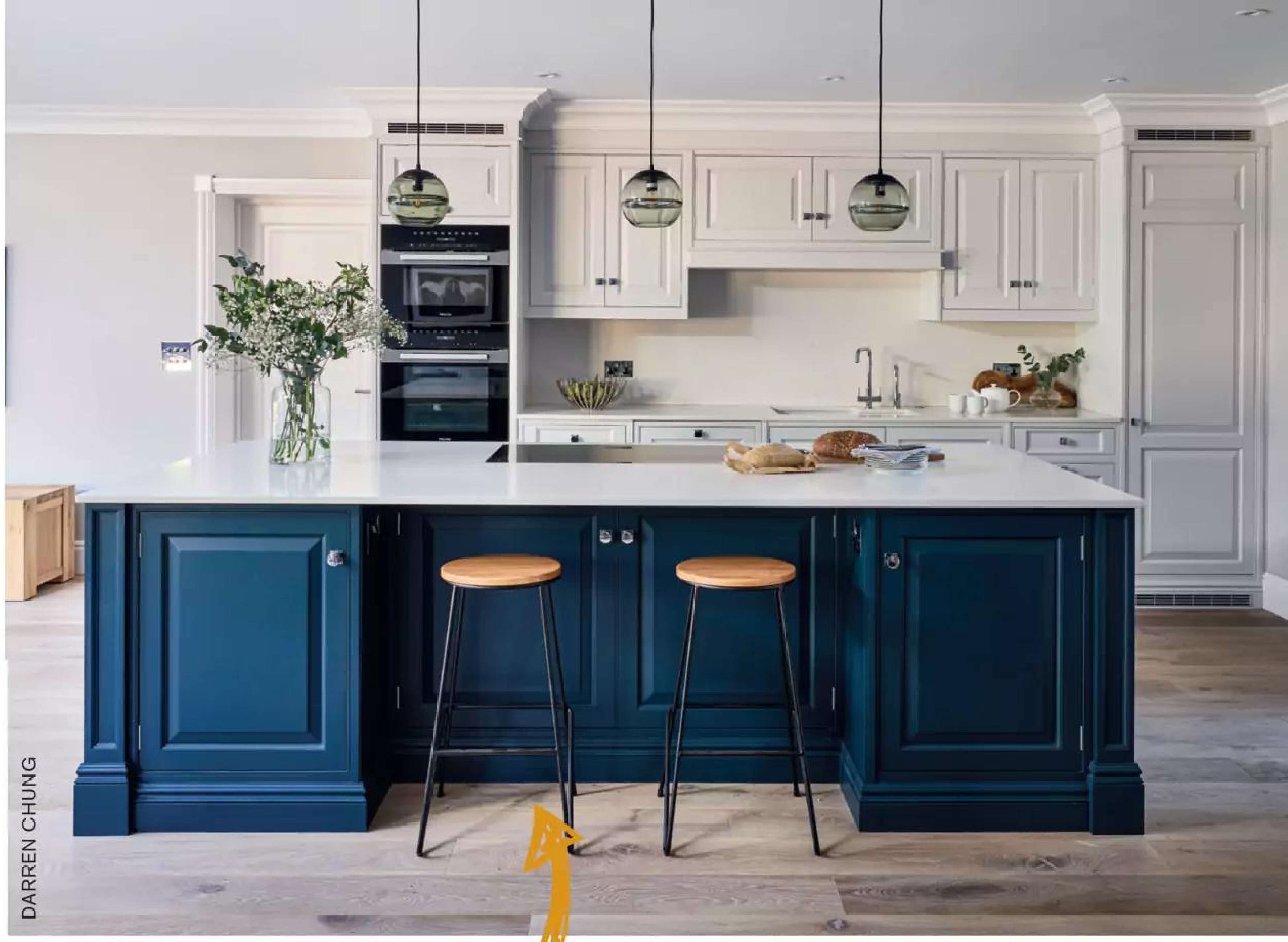
If you have the floor space, why not maximise your storage and workspace with multiple islands? Adaptions Kitchens designed this layout so that each unit has its own distinct purpose, to aid flow and functionality. The first one is for cooking and features a discreet flush fit induction hob. The other has a large wooden worktop for food preparation, while the third has a steel top with an integrated sink and boiling water tap. (www.adaptations.uk.com)

SPLIT LEVEL

The dual height of this island beautifully breaks the space into distinct yet fluid zones: the cooking area with modern hob and relaxed bar stools; and a formal dining spot. The split-level worktop influences the flow of traffic, improving circulation and logistics when entertaining guests. Taking inspiration from Scandinavian hygge style, the wooden materials create an inviting atmosphere, enhancing the natural, cosy warmth and social hubs of the room. (www.harveyjones.com)

gallery

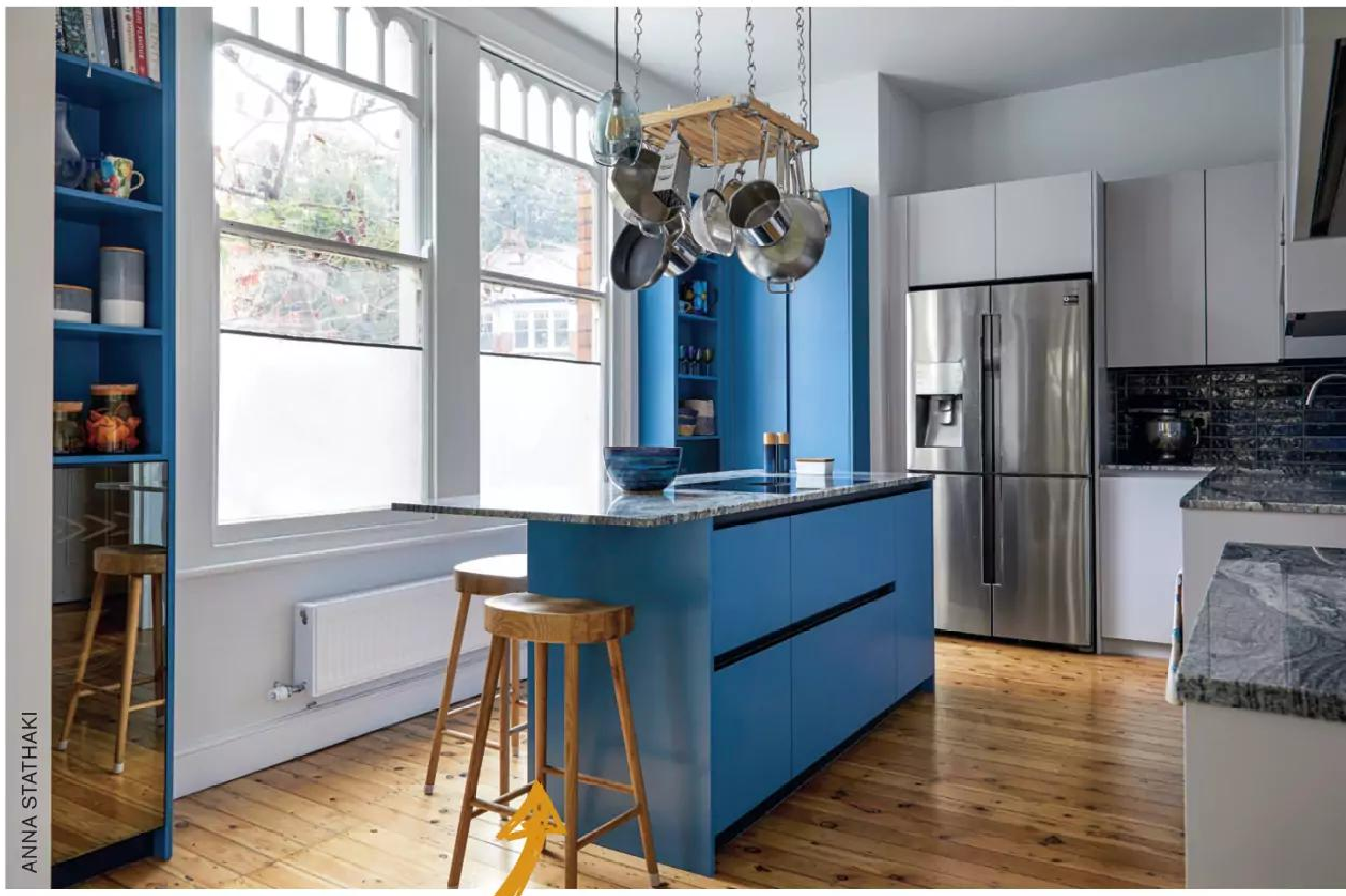
KATE BUCKINGHAM



DARREN CHUNG

BUILT-IN EXTRACTOR

This clever design is a generous size, with plenty of cupboard space on both sides and a nifty recessed area facing the kitchen for two bar stools to be stored. The drawers at the centre are 400mm deep, so they can sit in front of the flush-fitting induction hob's concealed extractor tower. When in use, the tower rises by up to 300mm to withdraw cooking odours directly next to the pans, meaning no overhead extraction is required. (www.simon-taylor.co.uk)



ANNA STATHAKI

CEILING SPACE

Taking full advantage of the decorative sash windows and natural light that bathes the room, this playful kitchen design perfectly exemplifies how to improve circulation and the dining experience. Handleless drawers discreetly conceal additional storage, while the overhanging surface hides wooden stools when not required, to save floor space. The worktop is made from natural Piracima granite, a luxurious blue-veined stone that beautifully complements the tone of the surrounding cupboards. A hanging pan rack adds charm and practicality. (www.kitchenbeedesign.com)

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RE-ROOFING A HOUSE

How can you tell when it's time to replace your roof's tiles, slate or thatch, what's involved and what should you budget? **Alan Tierney** explains the ins and outs

Above: This roof was stripped of poor quality cement tiles (inset), with new felt and battens fitted ready to accept reclaimed slates, fixed using copper nails

Below: A re-thatching project nearing completion. There are relatively few master thatchers in the UK nowadays, and their skills are highly valuable, so installed prices tend to be higher than most pitched roof coverings

Replacing a roof covering, or re-roofing, is a major undertaking. This type of project causes considerable disruption, not to mention cost. Often, smaller repairs and good maintenance can avoid or delay the need for this, but if things are too far gone, then more significant intervention will be required. In this article, I'm focusing on replacing the covering on all, or most of, a pitched roof – but first, a word on maintenance.

Delaying the need to re-roof

Roof issues often begin as minor concerns that can be swiftly and easily resolved if addressed promptly. Regular maintenance is essential. A few broken slates can be replaced and resecured with minimal effort, but if left unattended, they can develop into bigger problems.

Water ingress can weaken fixing nails, deteriorate battens and even compromise the supporting structure. Flashings at junctions with chimneys, parapet walls, and similar features can also fail, leading to leaks. Cement fillets are especially prone to cracking and should ideally be replaced with lead or GRP for durability. The mortar securing ridge tiles often deteriorates over time and requires repointing. Regularly monitoring the overall condition of the roof and addressing issues promptly will extend its lifespan and save you money in the long run.

Reasons for re-roofing

The most common reason for re-roofing is the deterioration of the covering or its fixings, with the causes varying by material. Physical damage, provoked by wind, falling trees or even careless walking (possibly by the trades who are up there patch-fixing) can require partial re-covering.

Occasionally, it's the supporting structure that fails – this is typically as a result of water ingress due to lack of regular maintenance. In such cases, even if the covering is still in reasonable condition, it will probably have to be removed to enable repair of the overall roof structure.

Unfortunately, problems can also result from misguided work carried out in the past. Concrete tiles are sometimes specified as a low-cost alternative to slate – but they're much heavier and can overload the structure. In some cases, if the covering has been replaced using a different material, you may simply want to reinstate the original for aesthetic reasons and to enhance your home's character.

Closed-cell spray foam insulation, applied beneath a roof, can damage both the structure and covering, sometimes necessitating full replacement. Even open-cell spray foam can cause issues; some mortgage lenders may refuse to offer finance unless the work was done by a certified installer with an insurance-backed warranty.

Do I need planning consent?

Replacing a roof covering like-for-like does not usually require planning permission. That said, changing the covering from one material to another, altering the roof line or changing details at the verges, eaves or junctions might trigger the need for an application.

Adding elements such as dormers, or making changes to enable occupation of the roof space, will need consent. If the house is in a conservation area, the likelihood planning permission will be required is much higher. If you're dealing with a listed building, then you will need to seek the right consent for any work that cannot be classified as a repair.

What about building control?

Building Regulations approval will usually (but not always) be required for roofing work. The regs define the roof as a thermal

CLOSER LOOK ROOFING MATERIALS

SLATE Very widely used from the 18th century onwards, this natural material is extremely hardwearing, but can suffer physical damage. Failure of slate roofs is usually caused by nail sickness, where the fixing nails have corroded. Most slates stripped from a roof can be reused. Copper nails will increase longevity.

STONE Historically used in parts of the country where suitable stone was locally available, and confusingly referred to as slates. These tiles are very hardwearing, but the quality is dependent on the roofer's skills. The uneven nature of the stone creates potential to trap water, leading to freeze / thaw damage if not well detailed.

CLAY TILES Traditionally handmade and used locally anywhere there were suitable clay deposits. Now widely available, ranging from the highest-quality handmades to much cheaper machine-pressed tiles. Longevity depends on a number of factors including the skill of the roofer, quality of manufacture and the weather, but clay tiles can generally last for up to 100 years.

CONCRETE TILES Mass produced and widely available, these products often aim to mimic other tiles or slates, though not very convincingly. They are not as durable as stone or slate, but much cheaper. Surface degradation can start to occur quite quickly, especially at the lower quality end, impacting the appearance.

THATCH A widespread historic roof covering in some parts of the country, but banned in London since The Great Fire. Usually either reed or straw, though other materials are used in small local areas. As an organic material, thatch has a limited lifespan and naturally degrades. Durability depends on quality of material, roof pitch, skill of the thatcher, degree of exposure, presence of overhanging trees, weather etc; but a good install should last around 60 years. The depth of thatch can be considerable – over 1m – but only the top layer should need to be replaced.

Top right: With some care and maintenance, this stone roof will last indefinitely

Above: This clay tile roof is in need of repair, and reaching the stage of needing to be fully replaced

element, which means it should comply with insulation requirements. If you are replacing more than 25% of the covering, then you must upgrade the insulation to satisfy regulations.

The easiest method is to add ample loft insulation over the ceiling structure below (the loft floor). In habitable roof spaces with a warm roof construction, additional insulation may be needed within the roofline. Many homes fall somewhere in between, featuring vaulted upper floors with partially sloping ceilings, requiring a combination of both approaches.

If work has to be carried out to the structure, or more than 50% of the covering is being replaced, Building Regulations will apply to the whole job. If in doubt, contact the local authority for advice. You can secure Building Regs approval through the council or via a licensed independent inspector. There is also a competent roofer scheme, which allows members to self-certify the work they carry out (you'll get a certificate of compliance on completion).

Insulate anyway

Regardless of Building Regulations requirements, upgrading insulation during roofing work is a smart move. A substantial amount of heat is lost through the roof, making this an ideal opportunity to improve thermal efficiency. For warm roofs or vaulted upper floors, retrofitting insulation later is far more challenging.

Straightforward cold roofs are easy to upgrade, but it's not a pleasant job, and access to awkward parts of the roof space will be easier when the covering has been stripped. It is also possible to add insulation to the roof line, converting a cold into a warm roof. However, I would not advise this unless you intend to convert the roof to living space in the near future. Cold roofs with good ventilation have less risk of mould growth and decay. On this note; it is essential that there is adequate, good cross ventilation. This is even more important in the insulated elements of the structure associated with warm roofs or vaulted ceilings.

Opportunities during a re-roof

When major work like this is being carried out, there's an opportunity to incorporate modifications that would make possible future alterations easier and more affordable. The most likely project, of course, is converting the roof space to create additional accommodation. If this is on the cards for you, then ask your roofers to incorporate counter battens beneath the new covering. When you add your insulation for the loft conversion, the counter battens will ensure a void is left for adequate ventilation.

If you're already sure you want to convert the loft into habitable space in future, then it would be worthwhile to actually fit the insulation in the roofline at this stage. You might even want to consider installing rooflights now, too.

Re-roofing costs

The amount of work involved in re-roofing is enormously variable, so it is not possible to give a truly reliable indication of how much it's likely going to cost. As a rough guide, it would be reasonable to expect the price of the full recovering of an average-sized roof to be around £15,000. Details, such as valleys and dormers will all add to the cost.

Materials also vary in price, from £120 per m^2 for the cheapest concrete tiles, to £300 per m^2 for good quality slates or clay tiles. Stone slates are very geographically specific and few quarries are still in operation, so often only reclaimed material is available, at a significant cost. Top of the price range is thatch, which is likely to be well into the £10,000s for a full roof. Any structural repair, insulation upgrade or additional work towards future conversion will represent a notable increase on these ballpark costs.

ALAN TIERNEY

Alan is a period property and conservation specialist. He ran a historic building consultancy, offering hands-on advice to the owners of heritage homes, but is now focused on renovating Old Barnstaple House.

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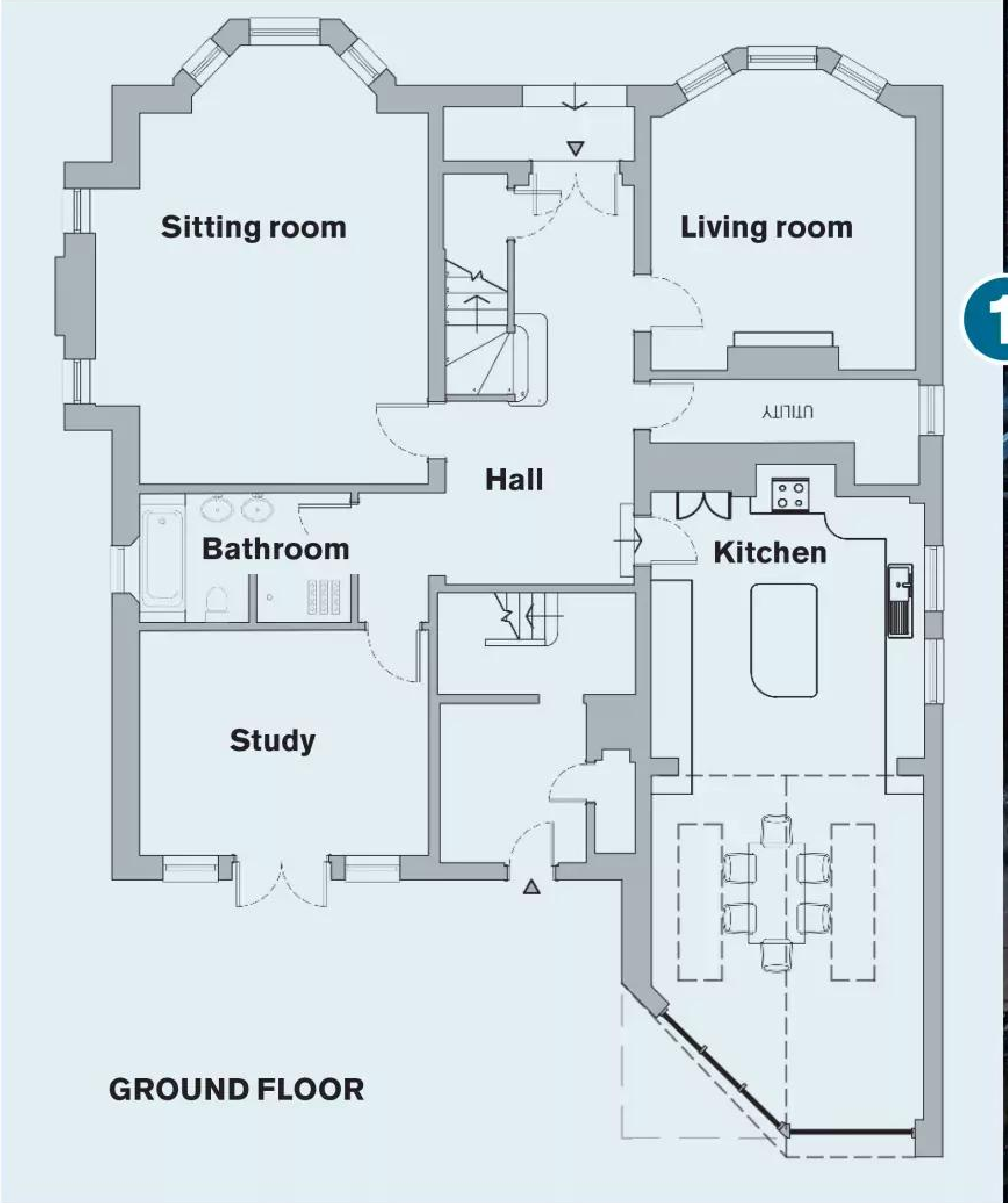


MIKEY REED

Designing the ideal configuration for your new space is key to a successful and cost-effective project. Erika Chaffey shares the core considerations for getting it right, plus some inspiring setups

Choosing the right floorplan for your extension starts with a clear understanding of how you want to use the space and the ways it can enhance your lifestyle. Are you envisioning a bright, open-plan kitchen diner to enjoy with family and friends? Or perhaps your aim is to create a cosy snug or an extra bedroom? Whatever your project goals, there's a range of configurations to help bring your vision to life.

Your existing property and site layout will heavily influence the structure of your new extension. Consider the location and orientation of your house to maximise natural light and make the most of surrounding views. Creating a connection to the outdoors is a common objective for this kind of project – your floorplan and layout should enhance this while complementing your home's style and features. It's also crucial to ensure the new space is seamlessly connected to your main property, avoiding the feel of an awkward or disconnected addition.

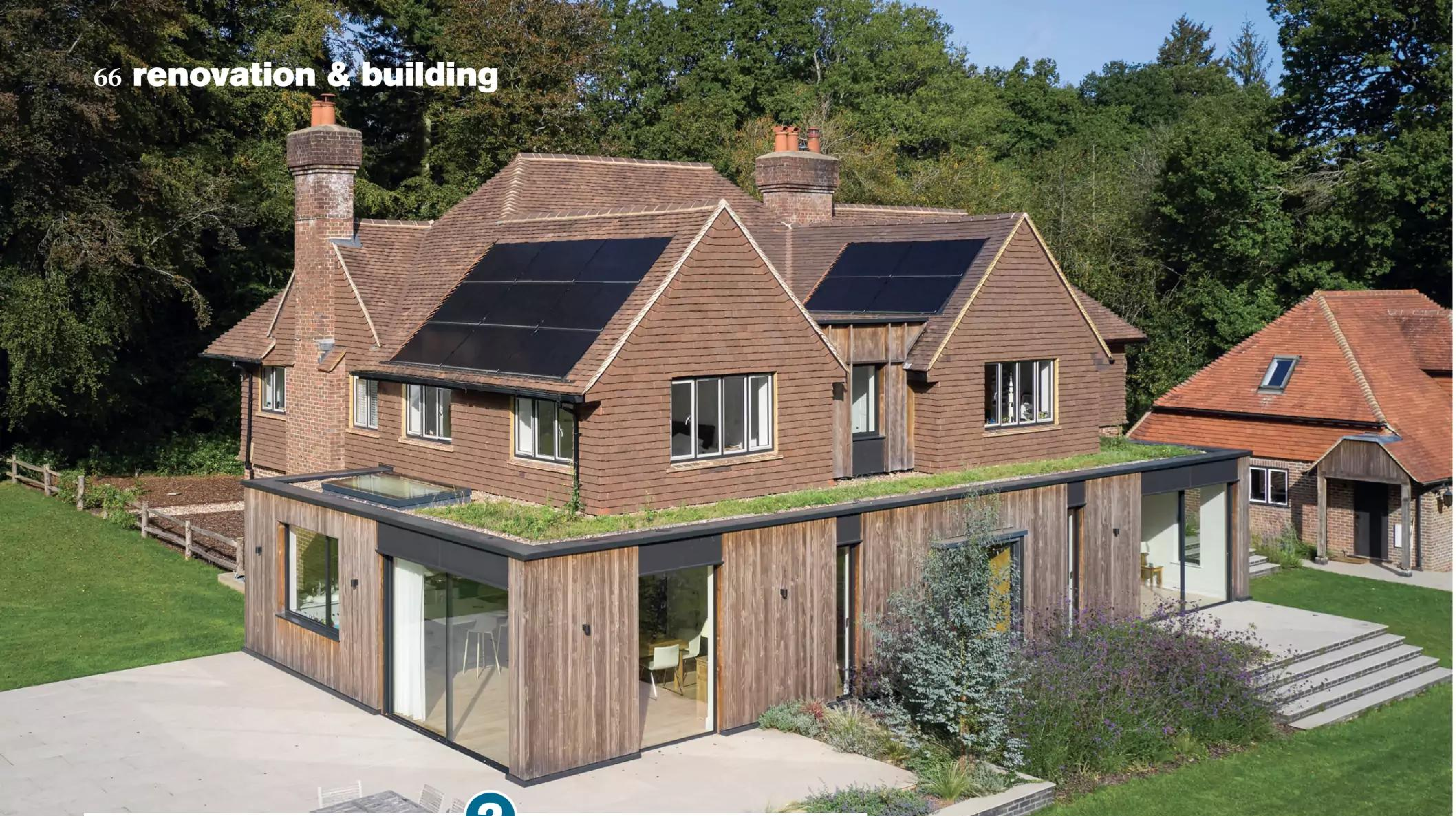
Effective use of space and budget is also key. While full-width or two-storey structures can add significant value, careful planning can often reveal that you don't need as much new floor space as you originally thought. By focusing on how you'll use the extension, what will go inside and where everything will be placed, you can design a functional, efficient layout that utilises every square inch.

Don't forget that specific rooms, like kitchens, often have standard size requirements for appliances and units. Think about where to incorporate clever storage solutions early on in the design process to help eliminate clutter and create a smooth, functional flow throughout the space. With these factors in mind, here's a selection of five popular floorplan ideas to inspire your extension project.

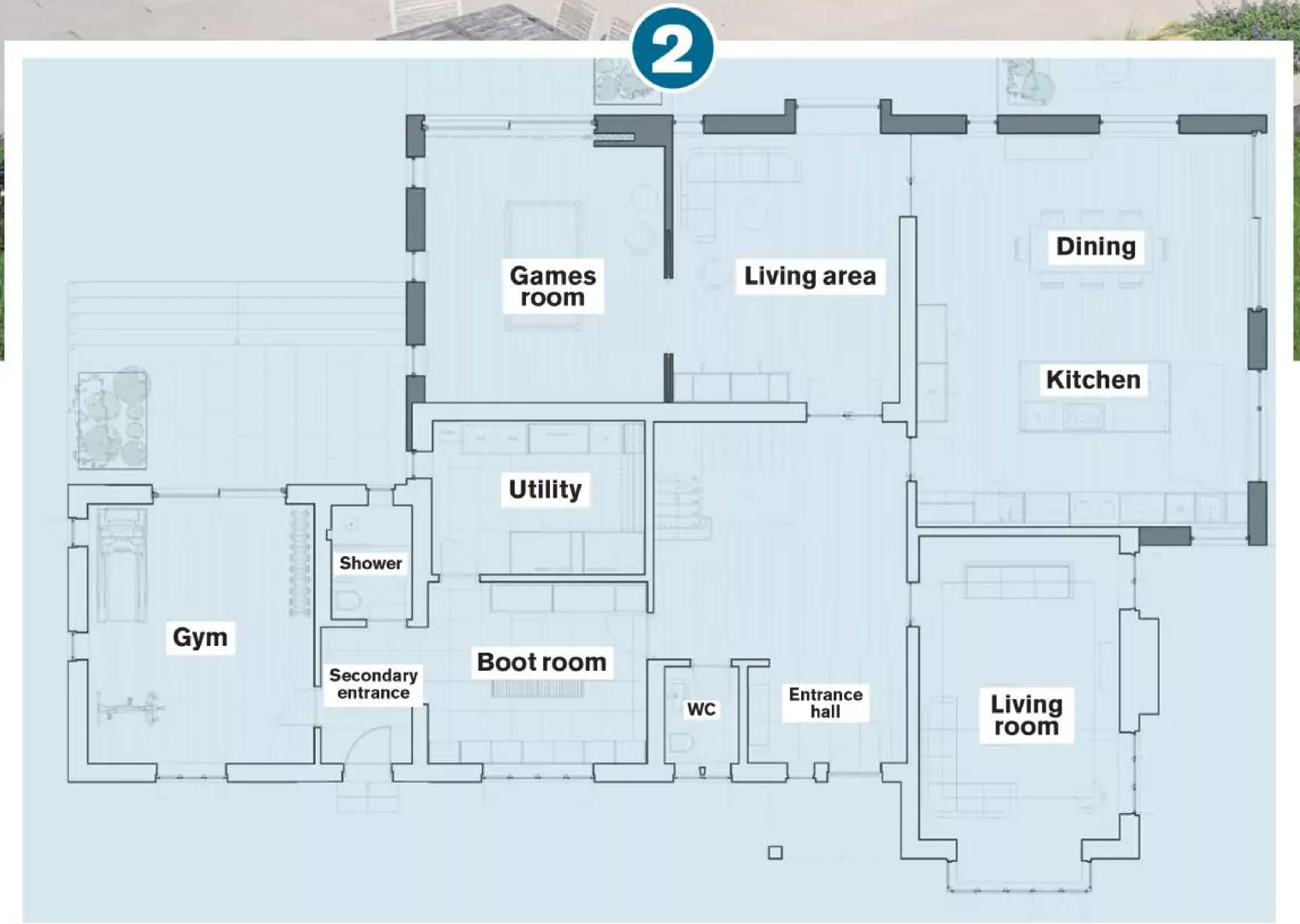
1 REAR

This setup is popular because it's often hidden from the front of the house, opening up creative design opportunities that don't impose on the street-facing area of your property. Ideally positioned to provide that sought-after indoor-outdoor connection, rear extensions are most commonly used for increasing kitchen or living space. Plus, they're a versatile option and can be designed in virtually any shape or size to suit your goals and budget.

Previously three separate flats with a series of minor extensions at the back, the owners of this property (above) enlisted Coleman Anderson Architects to create a more effective layout and reestablish the home's connection with the southern garden. They bought the house after the



RICHARD CHIVERS



ground and first floor apartments had been reconnected to form one unit. However, the layout of the ground floor and its relationship to the rear garden remained disjointed – with the existing kitchen space located centrally within the lower floorplan, completely cut-off from the outdoors. The reimagined addition features an eye-catching glazed gable, cleverly angled to make the most of the site's views. The new space houses an open-plan kitchen, living and dining area, without extending across the full-width of the house.

2 WRAPAROUND

L-shaped structures can add a significant amount of floor area to your home and make effective use of what is often redundant space down the side of your property. Typically combining a side infill and rear extension, they're a great solution for adding to your footprint without extending as far out to the rear and taking up garden space. If you have a larger plot with great vistas from multiple angles, a wraparound structure can open up access to your surroundings, revealing excellent sightlines and cross views. Plus, this configuration is ideal for zoning your space clearly, using the structure itself as a natural divider.

Designed by Adam Knibb Architects, this sympathetic extension (above) seamlessly wraps around the eastern and southern facades of the main property. The new space accommodates a series of open-plan living areas that flow seamlessly into one another – with a playroom, living room and kitchen/dining area all in one place. The first-floor extension mirrors the house's existing gable, with a timber-clad link situated behind it, which maintains the hierarchy between old and the new. Ample glazing and sliding doors connect the inside with the picturesque South Downs, while also flooding the space with natural light.

TOP TIPS FOR GETTING YOUR FLOORPLAN RIGHT

1 **PRIORITISE FUNCTIONALITY** Design your new space around exactly how you want to use and live in it, inspired by what your existing home lacks, to ensure a practical, efficient layout.

2 **ENSURE SEAMLESS FLOW** Consider the best way to integrate your new extension with your current home and its existing layout to avoid awkward transitions between the two zones.

3 **MAXIMISE LIGHT & VIEWS** Position windows, doors and rooflights to boost the amount of sunshine, create a strong indoor-outdoor connection and an enjoyable living space.

4 **PLAN FOR STORAGE & SERVICES** Incorporate built-in storage solutions at the design stage and factor in plumbing and electrics early.

5 **THINK LONG-TERM** Future-proof your design and plan with flexibility in mind, so you can enjoy your space for years to come.

3 TWO-STOREY

This configuration allows you to double up on added square footage without taking up the extra outdoor space. A double-height extension can be built to the side, rear or even front of your house, completely transforming the way you use your property as a whole, and increasing flexibility in your layout. It's a great solution for introducing a spacious shared or open-plan zone at one level, plus extra accommodation above or below, while taking on a singular project.

Careful consideration of how your new and existing rooms will connect is key to a successful design – this may mean rethinking your entire floorplan in order to make best use of the added space. The two levels don't have to be equal in size – you may not require the same footprint upstairs for say, one extra bedroom or a new study, as you'd like for a new, open living space on the ground floor.

This stunning example of a full-height, two-storey addition (below) to an end-of-terrace home was designed by Studio on the Rye. Located within a conservation area, the project created a new kitchen/diner, utility room and snug on the ground floor, plus a generous master bedroom with an ensuite shower room and walk-in wardrobe above. To mitigate the loss of some garden space, large sliding doors create two fully-glazed walls around the open-plan zone at ground floor level, providing a seamless transition between living spaces and the outdoors.

WHO CAN DESIGN MY FLOORPLAN?

Choosing the right professional to help conceptualise and draw up your extension floorplan is integral to creating a space that works for your lifestyle, budget, location and property. Here are your main options:

ARCHITECTS & TECHNOLOGISTS Highly experienced and qualified designers can create innovative layouts tailored to your needs, while ensuring structural integrity, planning compliance and high-quality finishes can be achieved on budget.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNERS Typically a more cost-effective alternative to architects, these professionals can focus on creating practical and stylish layouts without the full architectural service.

DESIGN & BUILD COMPANIES Many main contractors are set up to handle both the design and construction of your extension, streamlining the process and ensuring feasibility from the start.

TAKING A HANDS-ON APPROACH For smaller projects, home design software or online planning tools can help you sketch out initial ideas before consulting a professional for key advice.

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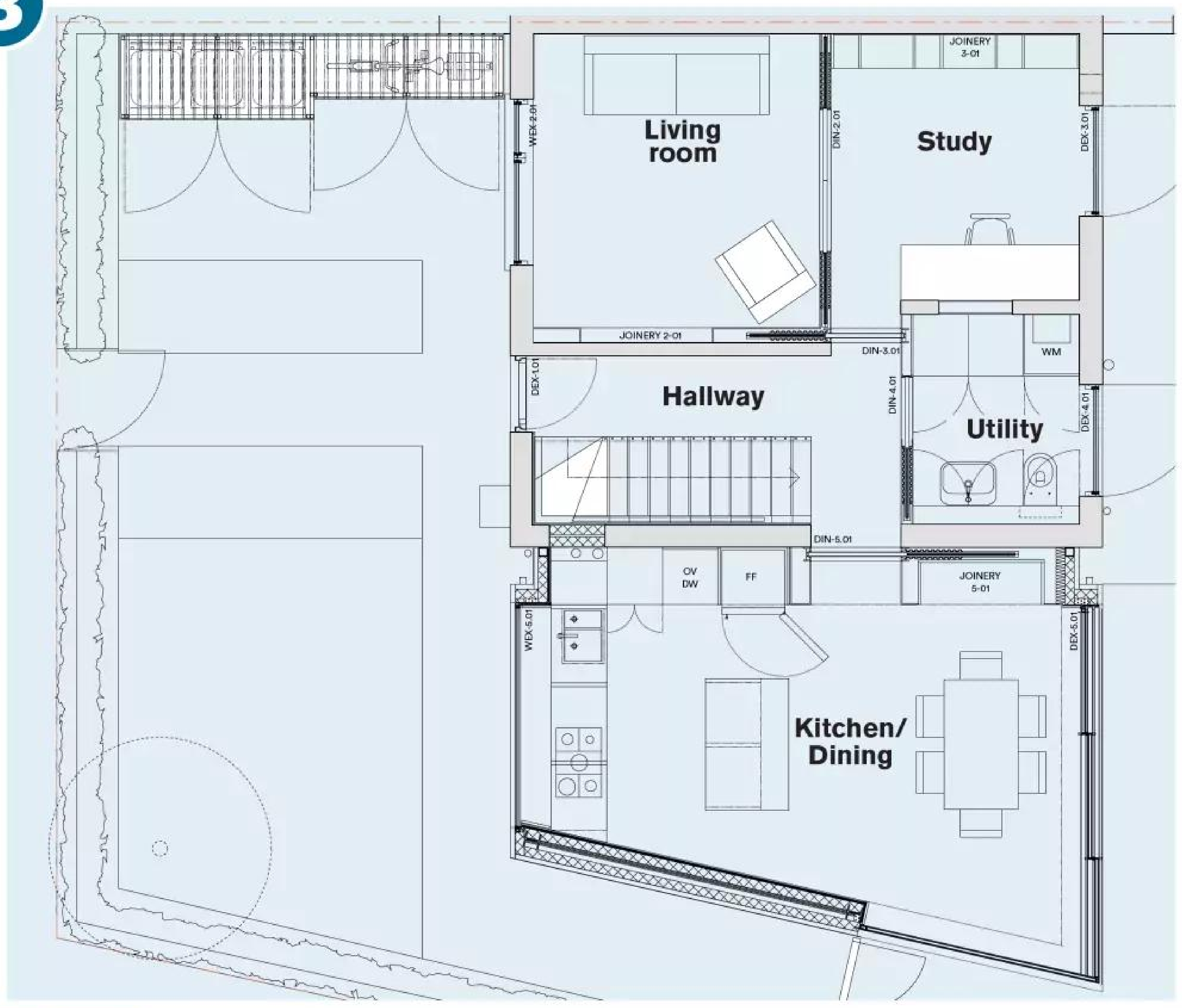

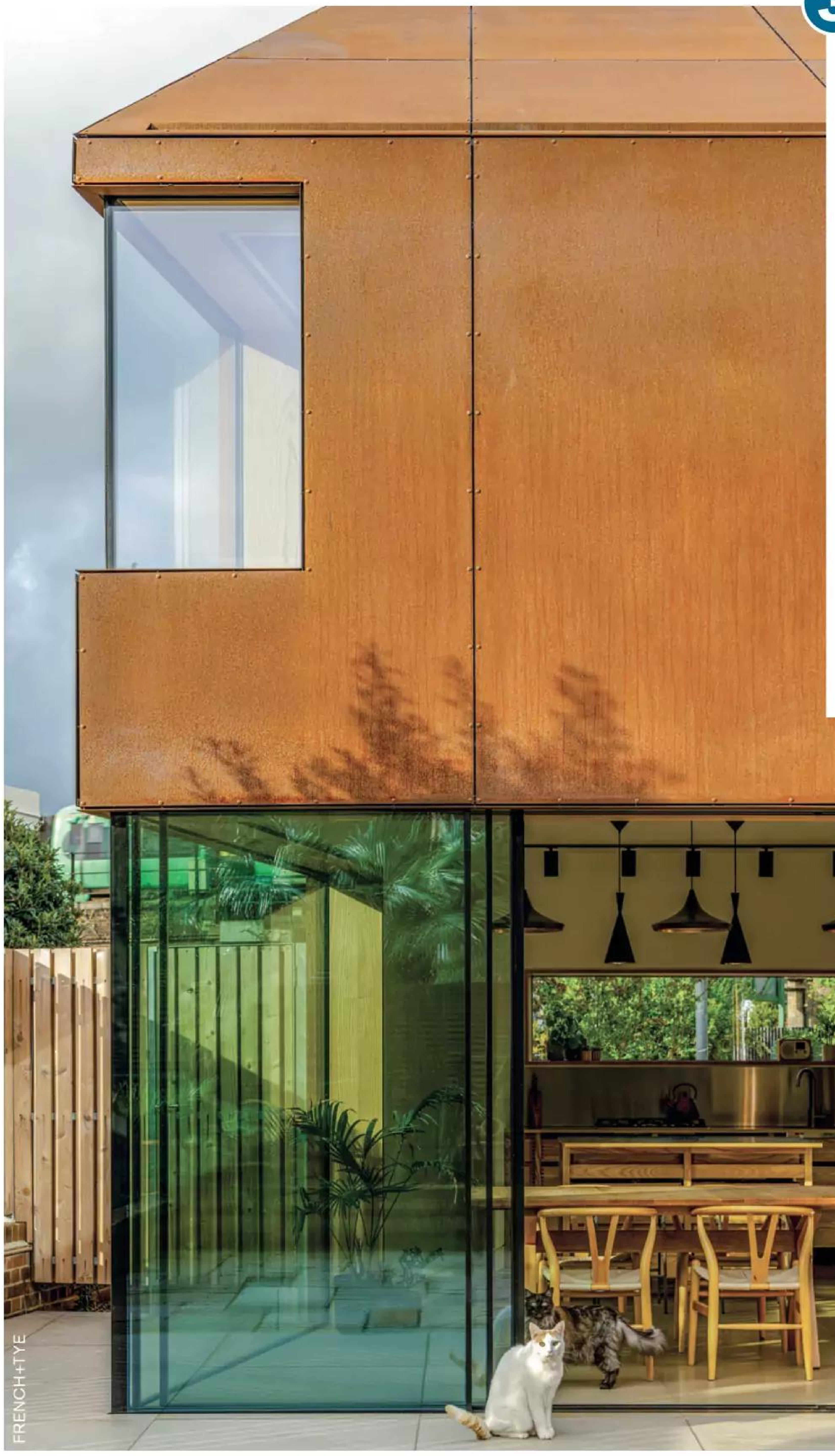
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4 SIDE RETURN

Often seen on period properties, terraced and semi-detached homes, this type of extension is a great way to make the most of typically unused, or awkward space between buildings. It's ideal for increasing the footprint of your ground floor and introducing light into existing rooms, with a relatively modest addition that won't take up much of your useable outside space. Typically, a side return extension will expand on an existing kitchen or living area. The size of the addition will vary depending on your property, but typically the build will allow space for a kitchen island, a new snug room or zoned-off dining area. Extending to the side can effectively open up your whole

DAVID BARBOUR

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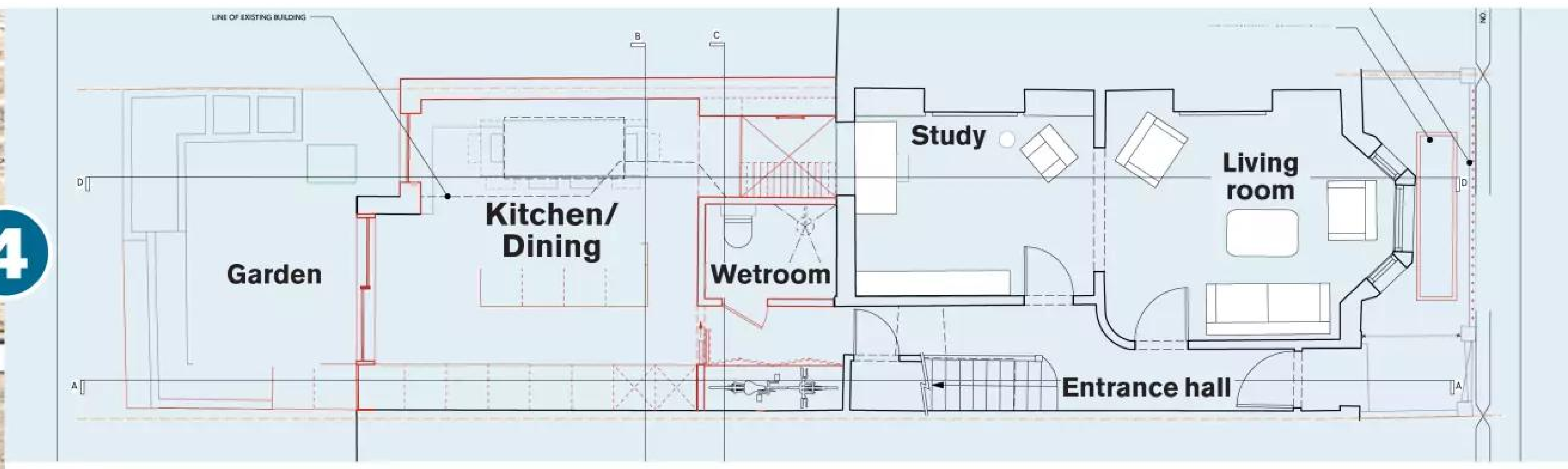

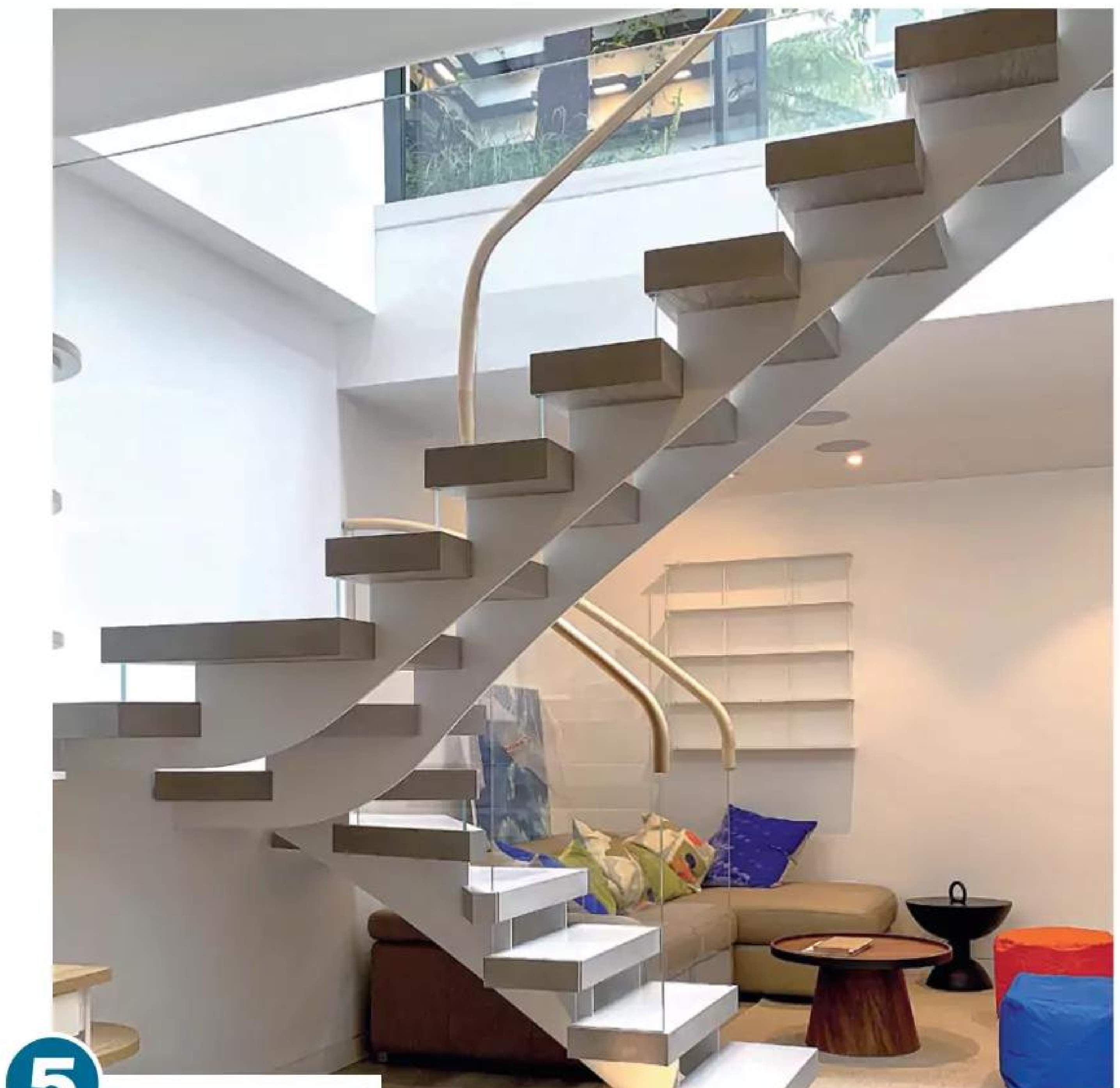

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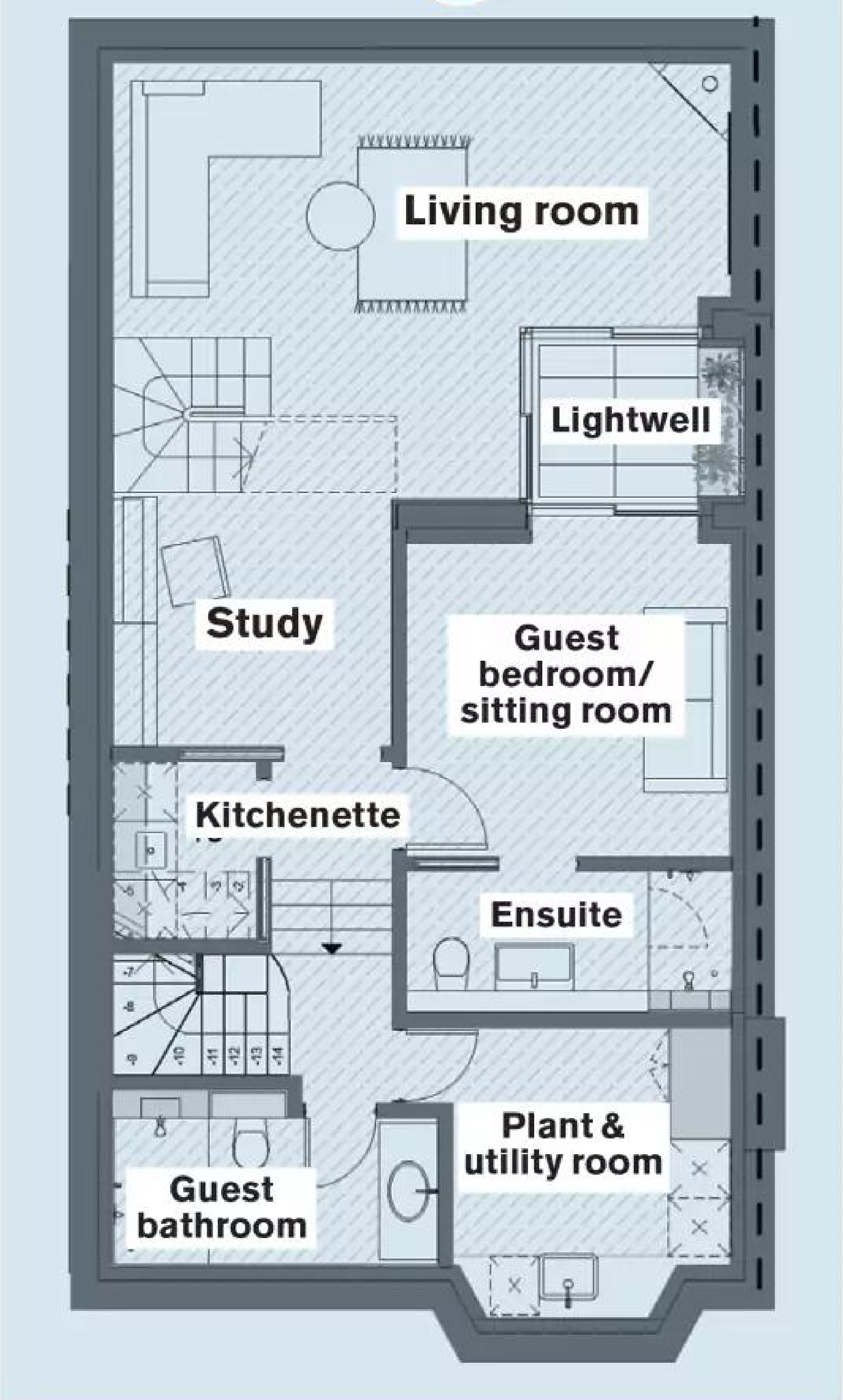

lower ground to the garden and make your floorplan feel more open, without taking on a substantial extension project or completely reconfiguring.

Archer + Braun Architecture designed this contemporary side return addition (above) to a terraced property in a conservation area. The modest structure provided just the right amount of space for a new kitchen and dining room. Making the most of a compact footprint and reducing the size of the kitchen slightly, a wet room and utility/bike cupboard was also incorporated, cleverly tailoring the layout to suit the homeowners' day-to-day lifestyle.

5 BASEMENT

If you don't have suitable outside space or a loft area to convert, digging down is a great way to add usable living area to your home. Thanks to natural sound insulation from being surrounded by solid walls and subsoil, this option is great for creating games rooms, gyms, home cinemas and even swimming pools, or simply a secluded zone for relaxing. The floorplan for this kind of extension requires careful consideration, especially in terms of staircase placement and ensuring access to sunlight in the form of lightwells or a well-designed artificial lighting scheme.

Maintaining a connection with the rest of the house is also vital. Ideally the staircase will be immediately below the ground-to-first-floor flight and lead to the hallway, providing a safe and direct route out of the basement. Locating it elsewhere can eat into the available space in your current rooms.

The simplest way to construct this kind of extension is to follow the line of existing structural walls above – otherwise known as underpinning. But it's also possible to extend horizontally beyond your home's footprint, which can often allow for rooflights to be installed in the ground above your new subterranean zone.

This basement extension project (above) in London stretches the length of the home's entire floorplan and beyond to the rear garden. The bespoke staircase with glazed balustrade provides a seamless connection between the upper and lower storeys, while maximising the flow of sunlight into the area. Designed by 2pm Architects, the new space was made to feel like part of the main house, with plenty of natural light and fresh air. A lightwell above brings in even more sun and offers some outdoor views.

CONTACTS **Adam Knibb Architects** 01962 680221 www.adamknibbarchitects.com **Archer + Braun** 020 3488 2692 www.archerandbraun.com **Coleman Anderson Architects** 01892 537124 www.colemananderson.co.uk **Studio on the Rye** 020 7924 0125 www.studioontherye.com **2pm Architects** 020 7604 4339 www.2pm-architects.co.uk

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BUILDING WITH TIMBER

Find out why offsite-manufactured systems such as timber frame, SIPs and oak offer a fantastic route for self builders to achieve a quality, high-performance home

Timber structural systems are hugely popular with self builders – for good reason. Wood might be one of the oldest construction materials around, but it's also affordable, attractive, sustainable and incredibly versatile. Indeed, the use of timber is constantly evolving. Whether you're considering pre-insulated panelised methods or a post-and-beam build, there's a timber system to match your architectural, performance and cost expectations. Plus, the whole industry is set up to deliver a convenient route to creating high-quality bespoke homes on time and on budget.

Structural timber options

In this guide, we're focussing on the go-to timber systems that most self builders are likely to consider for their projects. There are alternatives, such as CLT (cross-laminated timber) panels and types of post-and-beam construction that use engineered wood, but these are relatively rare at present. The mainstream options include:

Timber frame Typically supplied as storey-height closed panels, pre-filled with your choice of insulation for guaranteed performance, although open panel systems are also available (where your contractors insert the insulation on site). Widely thought of as competitive on price with conventional masonry builds, while offering a quicker route to creating a high-quality home.

SIPs Short for structural insulated panels, this is another panelised system. The difference is there's no supporting internal studwork – instead, OSB sheathing is effectively glued to a core of rigid insulation, meaning there are no thermal bridges within the panel. This creates super-strong yet lightweight components that can be used for both walls and roof structures.

▲ Featuring a striking sling braced oak frame by Border Oak, this bespoke forever home is wrapped in SIPs panels (see left), and clad with hit-and-miss vertical timber boards and Cotswold stone

UK Forks
0800 123 101
ROTO

Oak frame One of the few systems where the structural components are left on display, oak framing adds instant charm and character to a building. Today's oak homes embrace a range of architectural styles, while delivering modern energy performance via insulating encapsulation panels, which could be SIPs or timber frame, for instance.

Hybrid Sometimes, a combination of systems is the best option to achieve specific project goals. For instance, you might build a timber or SIPs house atop a basement built in heavyweight construction (such as insulated concrete formwork), or opt primarily for a panelised timber frame to keep costs down and switch to oak purely for wow-factor features like glazed gables.

Benefits of structural timber

There are plenty of reasons to specify a timber building method for your project, but the headliners include:

Design flexibility Timber systems can be used to realise pretty much any bespoke home design you could

EXPERT VIEW TIMBER FRAME

DAVID COLEMAN *is business development director at Timber Innovations, and has a wealth of experience in construction and timber building systems*

"The beauty of timber frame is that it's a flexible system. We might start off with a standard 140mm stud, with a given insulation in it, but we can easily change things if you want a better U-value or would prefer to use a natural material, such as wood fibre, sheep's wool or recycled newspaper.

If you're keen to take a sustainable, fabric first approach, the timber frames of 2025 are really high-performing solutions. We're seeing more people opting for our twin-wall Larsen system, for instance, where two stud walls are held together with a timber gusset, significantly reducing thermal bridging. It's all about spending money in the right areas: namely a quality walling system and good airtightness. Yes, there's a premium for a twin-wall system – maybe 20% on the wall cost – but the extra saving from the enhanced thermal efficiency of your home for the next 30+ years means it's almost a false economy not to do it.

There are so many benefits of timber frame, from saving time and money on site, through to flexibility in design – using roof cassette panels to achieve vaulted ceilings, for instance. Plus, it's the most carbon neutral building material available. And the cost security it offers, as a complete package, gives you confidence in delivering your project on budget."

SPEEDY & SUSTAINABLE

Fleming Homes engineered, manufactured and supplied the efficient and quick-to-erect timber frame for this dream eco-friendly home

FACT FILE	
Type of project	Self build
Location	Scottish Borders
Construction method	Timber frame
Project route	Design & supply
House size	215m^2(incl garage)
Timber frame cost	£121,971
Total build cost	£370,000
Supplier	Fleming Homes

Nestled in the tranquil Roxburghshire landscape, White Horse Cottage fuses design excellence, efficiency and innovation. Visionary self builders George Boath and Jeneane Ezzell collaborated closely with architect Philip Benton of Vellow Wood (vellowwood.com) to realise their dream of a sustainable, energy-efficient home.

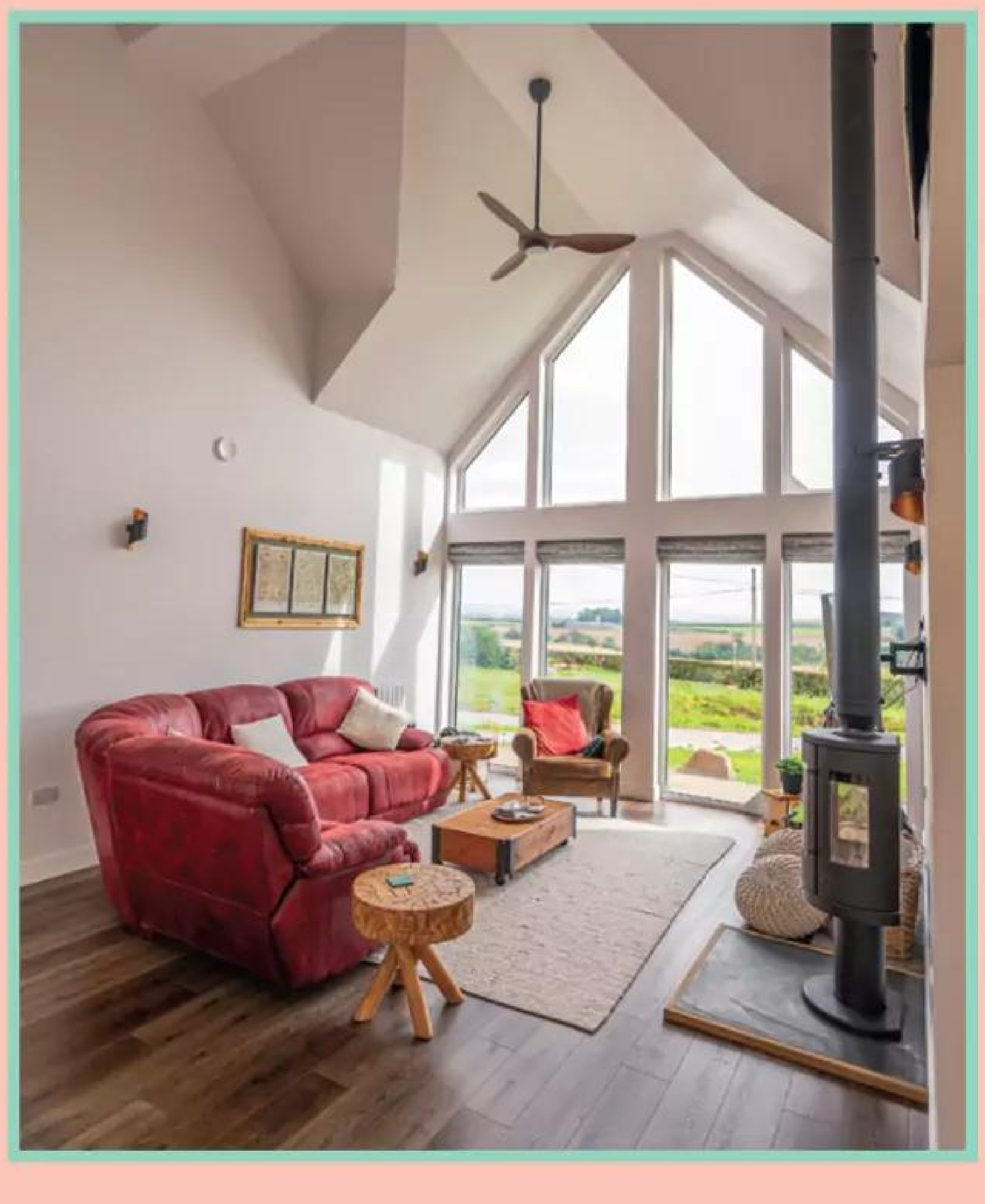
After selling their Gloucestershire property in 2021, George and Jeneane struggled to find a house that ticked all their boxes. It was a work colleague who first suggested they consider looking for a plot and building their own house.

Each element of the project reflects the owners' commitment to eco-conscious living, while seamlessly integrating their personal needs and preferences into a bespoke home. With warm, light-filled interiors and advanced energy systems, the four-bedroom layout has been carefully crafted with dedicated spaces for work, leisure and socialising. At its heart is a striking barn-style living area, with vaulted ceilings and expansive glazing that frames views of the Tweed Valley and Cheviot Hills.

A prefabricated timber frame was chosen for its thermal efficiency and the speed of on site construction. "We weren't prepared to sit and wait for the time it would take for a stick build or brick and block," says George. "Construction speed was the number one reason we chose timber frame, along with our desire to create a sustainable home." The couple moved into the house just six months after breaking ground.

George and Jeneane chose Fleming Homes as their supplier. "We felt more than just a number," they say. "The team's willingness to work with us on individual components, plus the prompt and personal communications, made a huge difference to our self build experience."

CONTACT Fleming Homes
01361 883785 www.fleminghomes.co.uk



▲ Build It readers Jonathan and Joanna Lunn chose Baufritz to deliver their timber frame home on a turnkey basis. The company prioritise natural and sustainable materials, such as wood-shaving insulation, for its high-performance bespoke projects

imagine, from chocolate-box cottages to wow-factor modern structures, clad in all manner of materials. "If it can be drawn, it can be built," says Simon Orrells managing director at Frame Technologies. For best results, engage with your supplier early, so they can work with your architect to make the most of the system.

Value-engineered package A big advantage of timber systems it you're commissioning one company to take care of the structural design, materials supply and – in many cases – erection of your home's insulated shell. This will typically comprise all the external walls, any steels, floor structures and decks, internal walls and the roof structure. All of this will be factory-manufactured according to the agreed design, which you can work with the supplier to value-engineer to ensure you're getting the most from its system.

Convenience With a timber build, many of the decisions and much of the core work are done before construction begins on site. On a practical level, with a sizable chunk of your project tied up in a single package, there are fewer trades to arrange and project manage before your dream home build reaches weathertight stage.

Performance Whether you're working in timber frame, SIPs, oak or a combination of systems, your supplier will work closely with you to achieve your goals for energy efficiency. Their design output will include the insulated superstructure, plus psi values and airtightness measures, as well as how the shell interfaces with other elements of the build, such as foundations, windows and cladding. You'll also get factory assurance over elements such as the quality of insulation coverage – not to mention there's less need for site operatives to undertake thermal measures on site. All of this provides confidence over the as-built performance of your home, and how follow-on trades should approach the rest of the works to preserve the insulated, airtight envelope.

Quality The benefits of factory assurance don't just apply to energy performance. "By adhering to strict standards, timber system manufacturers consistently deliver high-quality frames that fit together seamlessly on site, reducing construction time and costs," says Jay Hubbard, managing director at English Brothers.

Build speed Factory manufacture ensures an accurate, easily assembled house shell that will be completed to a guaranteed schedule (and isn't at the mercy of the British weather). Many bespoke timber homes reach weathertight stage – an insulated and dry building – in just a few short weeks. Oak projects will take slightly longer, because you're combining the post-and-beam skeleton with an insulating panel system.

Cost certainty "Systems like timber frame, SIPs and oak frame aren't just four walls and a roof," says Simon. "They're a complete engineered solution, provided at a fixed cost and by a single point of contact." So, once you share your plans and performance expectations

EXPERT VIEW SIPS

ANDY PORTER, *partner at SIPS@Clays, has worked in the construction industry since leaving university, and has over two decades of experience in delivering projects using structural insulated panels*

"SIPs has been around for over 20 years, and it's a tried-and-tested system that does what it says on the tin. The kit is basically a big jigsaw that goes together easily on site, which makes it a very simple way of building an airtight, pre-insulated home, where you know the U-value you were quoted is what you'll get. All the joints are sealed, and everything's pulled tightly together, so you can get a great result – down to an airtightness of 1m^3/hr/m^2 – without having to rely on people doing secondary work on site. The SIPs wall forms your airtightness layer, and you can do away with a lot of the cost and snagging involved in installing additional tapes and membranes.

It's also a super-rigid system that doesn't settle, so you won't have to deal with construction cracks as you do with other building methods. The panels can deliver lovely vaulted roof spaces, too, which works really well for dormer bungalows, 2.5 and 3.5 storey homes. With our system, you can get the roof straight on and it's ready-insulated, rather than having to take the time to insulate trusses on site. If you want to build a high-performance house with a room-in-the-roof, SIPs is a cost-effective way to do it – and you get a beautiful, rigid building that requires minimal heating."

▲ A Kingspan TEK SIPs panel being craned into position as part of a project by Glosford SIPs, enabling room-in-the-roof living space

with your preferred supplier, they'll be able to provide an accurate quote – often guaranteed for six-plus months – that gives you clarity over costs going forward.

Sustainability Provided it's responsibly sourced (ask about FSC or PEFC certification), timber is by nature a renewable material. So, it gives you a great platform for a low-carbon project, and with some systems you can take that a stage further by opting for natural insulations, such as wood fibre. You can then choose to match that with your follow-on specifications.

EXPERT VIEW OAK FRAME

FERGUS STUART, *design and project consultant at Carpenter Oak, has a deep understanding of every step in taking a project from concept to realisation*

"Oak frames are beautiful, which means they're left exposed rather than being concealed behind wall and ceiling finishes. So, in many ways, I don't see oak as the same as other timber building systems.

We love working collaboratively with clients, whether through our in-house design team or their own architect. Typically, self builders will come to us as one of the very first people on their project, looking for ideas and advice in terms of both design and costs.

One important consideration is bay size. This is the gap between the primary oak frames, which should be 4m at most. We do see lots of schemes where the designer hasn't thought about this, with rooms that are 5m long, for instance, so we end up having to shoehorn the frame into a design that already has planning. It's key to design efficiently from the get-go, so floorplans are considered with an oak frame in mind rather than vice-versa.

Performance-wise, oak is compatible with almost all of the offsite-manufactured timber systems for encapsulation – as well as traditional site-built options. So, we're not prescriptive, but do have partner firms we work with on a range of different systems. Clients often have specific goals for sustainability and budget, and many want to use local suppliers where possible.

Cost-wise, going for a fully oak framed house typically adds about £500 per m^2 on the total price of a standard build. But that's only in the areas where the oak frame is evident: if you only have it in the sunroom or one wing of the house, you could apply that £500 metric just to that zone. Of course, this does depend on how much timber's there and the complexity of the oak frame design."

Moving your project forward

If you want to make the most of your budget and fully exploit what timber systems have to offer, then the best place to start is by engaging with suppliers early on in the process – ideally before you submit for planning permission. This way, they can help you interrogate the design and rationalise the scheme before you've spent time and money getting consent for something that's going to be complex or expensive to turn into a reality.

As with any element of your project, speak to a range of potential partners and call in several quotes, so you can give yourself comparison points. For instance, one quote might include craneage, while the other expects you to organise this yourself. Another might offer quicker lead times for manufacture that better fit with your schedule, or give your more options over insulation specifications and how your performance goals are realised. The key thing is to not focus purely on cost: yes, we all want to build as affordably as possible, but you only have one chance to get the fabric of your new home right – and if you're considering a timber system, then you're already thinking about quality.

There are many suppliers to choose from. Working out who the right partner is for your project is crucial. This might come down to the level of service they offer – for instance, do you want a firm that can do in-house architectural design, or are you planning to use an external pro? Can they match your expectations in terms of performance and use of materials? How interested do they seem in your build? If they're asking you as many questions as you're asking them, that's usually a good sign. Among the places you could start your search are Build It's online directory (**self-build.co.uk/directory**) or your nearest Build It Live show (**builditlive.co.uk**) – where you can typically meet dozens of leading timber system suppliers. It's also worth considering members of the Structural Timber Association (STA), which operates a quality scheme called STA Assure to give you confidence over who you engage.

CONTACTS

Baufritz 01223 235632 www.baufritz.com **Border Oak** 01568 708752 www.borderoak.com **Carpenter Oak** 01803 732900 www.carpenteroak.com **Dan-Wood** 01896 752271 www.dan-wood.co.uk **English Brothers** 01945 427985 www.englishbrothers.co.uk **Fleming Homes** 01361 883785 www.fleminghomes.co.uk **Frame Technologies** 01544 267124 www.frametechnologies.co.uk **Glosford SIPs** 01432 842999 www.glosfordsips.co.uk **Point1 Building Systems** 01743 460066 www.point1buildingsystems.com **Oakwrights** 01432 353353 www.oakwrights.co.uk **Scandia-Hus** 01342 838060 www.scandia-hus.co.uk **SIPS@Clays** 01756 799498 www.clays.com **Timber Innovations** 0121 314 7735 www.timberinnovations.co.uk **Turner Timber** 01482 218945 www.turnertimber.co.uk **STA** 01259 272140 www.structuraltimber.co.uk

TIMBER WINDOWS

Looking for a durable, thermally-efficient option packed with design potential and character? Take a look at why wood could be the ideal choice for your home

▲The Rationel Forma range is available in over 200 colour options to help create a timeless look that matches your home's style. Manufactured entirely from solid wood, this solution offers excellent thermal and acoustic performance, plus easy maintenance and a 40-year life expectancy. The triple-glazed option provides U-values as low as 0.78 W/m². **(www.rationel.co.uk)**

▲Easy operation, a clean appearance and excellent thermal efficiency make casement windows a popular choice for a range of home styles. This bespoke option from Kloeber can be finished in any RAL colour of your choosing. The versatile design is available with double or triple glazing, offering excellent U-values down to 0.9W/m²k. The timber flush casement window starts from **£1,415**. **(www.kloeber.co.uk)**

Windows play a vital role in shaping the overall look and feel of your home, enhancing both your interior scheme and your property's kerb appeal. They can also be a major source of heat loss, making high-quality frames and glazing essential for overall performance. Timber is an energy-efficient, versatile solution that excels in both form and function. Engineered timber products, in particular, can enhance security, thermal efficiency and acoustics. Plus, modern paint and stain systems mean maintenance is minimal – many windows come with an 8+ year warranty on finishes.

Thanks to modern manufacturing, timber windows offer a wealth of design possibilities. The frames can be painted or finished in virtually any colour and shaped to suit contemporary or traditional styles, plus everything in between. You can opt to highlight the natural grain and knot patterns of the wood or choose from a wide range of stains, paints and veneers for a fully customised finish. The design and framing options are virtually limitless, meaning you can find the perfect timber windows to complement your home's style, while ensuring exceptional performance.

With so many options available, it's key to consult with suppliers early on in the design and planning stages to ensure the windows meet your precise size and specification needs. Here, we're showcasing some popular designs and exploring the practical and aesthetic benefits that timber has to offer.

▲With ultra-slim, unobtrusive frames, picture windows are a great way to maximise sightlines and the flow of natural light through your space. The P31A in a fixed pane model from Norrsken provides an eye-catching snapshot of the outdoors, with all the performance benefits of a timber frame. This model starts from **£1,000 per m²**. **(www.norrsken.co.uk)**

◀ Available in both an outward-opening side- or top-hung configuration, plus an inward-opening tilt and turn option, this stylish design from 21° is fully customisable. Ideal for creating a thermally efficient home, the triple-glazed option can reach U-values of 0.80 W/m^2K. Part of the GBS78 range, costs start at **£720**. **(www.21degrees.com)**

Manufactured from ▶ sustainably sourced timber, the Stryaline from Ecowin creates a sleek, flush finish with an installation depth of 92mm, enhancing thermal efficiency and weather resistance, as well as aesthetics. It comes with triple glazing as standard, achieving U-values as low as 0.75 W/m^2K. Prices start at **£635** for the tilt and turn, or **£395** for fixed. **(www.ecowin.co.uk)**

◀ Boasting great performance values, plus plenty of heritage charm, sliding sash windows are a classic choice. This custom-made, timber spring sash design from Mumford & Wood's conservation range easily passes PAS24 security standards, and comes in a range of frame profiles and glazing bar options. **(www.mumfordwood.com)**

Grabex's sash ▶ windows expertly replicate the traditional design, using multi-layered engineered timber for excellent durability and modern performance values. Bespoke options and specialised solutions for listed buildings or conservation areas are available in a range of RAL colours and timber stains to suit your home's unique requirements. **(www.grabex.co.uk)**

EXPERT VIEW

NIGEL JACKSON, *director at Norrsken answers the key questions for specifying high-quality timber windows to complement your home*

Q When should you reach out to potential timber window suppliers?

A On a self build project, it's best to speak with expert providers during the planning phase – before breaking ground. Working out a feasible budget by comparing quotes and discussing your project's needs with specialists is best done as soon as possible. Making important decisions about the details in your build such as set-backs, rebates for sills and junctions with the building's exterior detailing, are just a few of the considerations that will alter certain window and door features, and shouldn't be rushed or decided on the fly.

Q How can you ensure you're making a sustainable choice when specifying?

A Firstly, know that in choosing timber you're making the most eco-conscious decision in terms of frame material. Production methods and waste matter is inherently more environmentally friendly than those made out of PVCu or aluminium. Plus, they have a much lower embodied carbon footprint than most PVCu options.

Look for products that use Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) accredited timber. These are two internationally recognised systems for the certification of sustainable forestry management.

Thirdly, look for thermally-efficient options with low U-values that provide environmental benefits through energy savings in the home. Aim for whole window U-values of 1.2 W/m^2K or less to meet the 2025 Future Homes Standard for new builds, or 0.8 W/m^2K and below to meet ultra-low Passivhaus requirements.

Q What species of wood are timber windows typically made from?

A Various wood types have been used to manufacture windows and doors over time. Species pass in and out of popularity for cost, availability and performance reasons. Our windows are made from pine, spruce or oak depending on the specification and customer requirements. These are selected for their durability, aesthetics and thermal insulation properties.

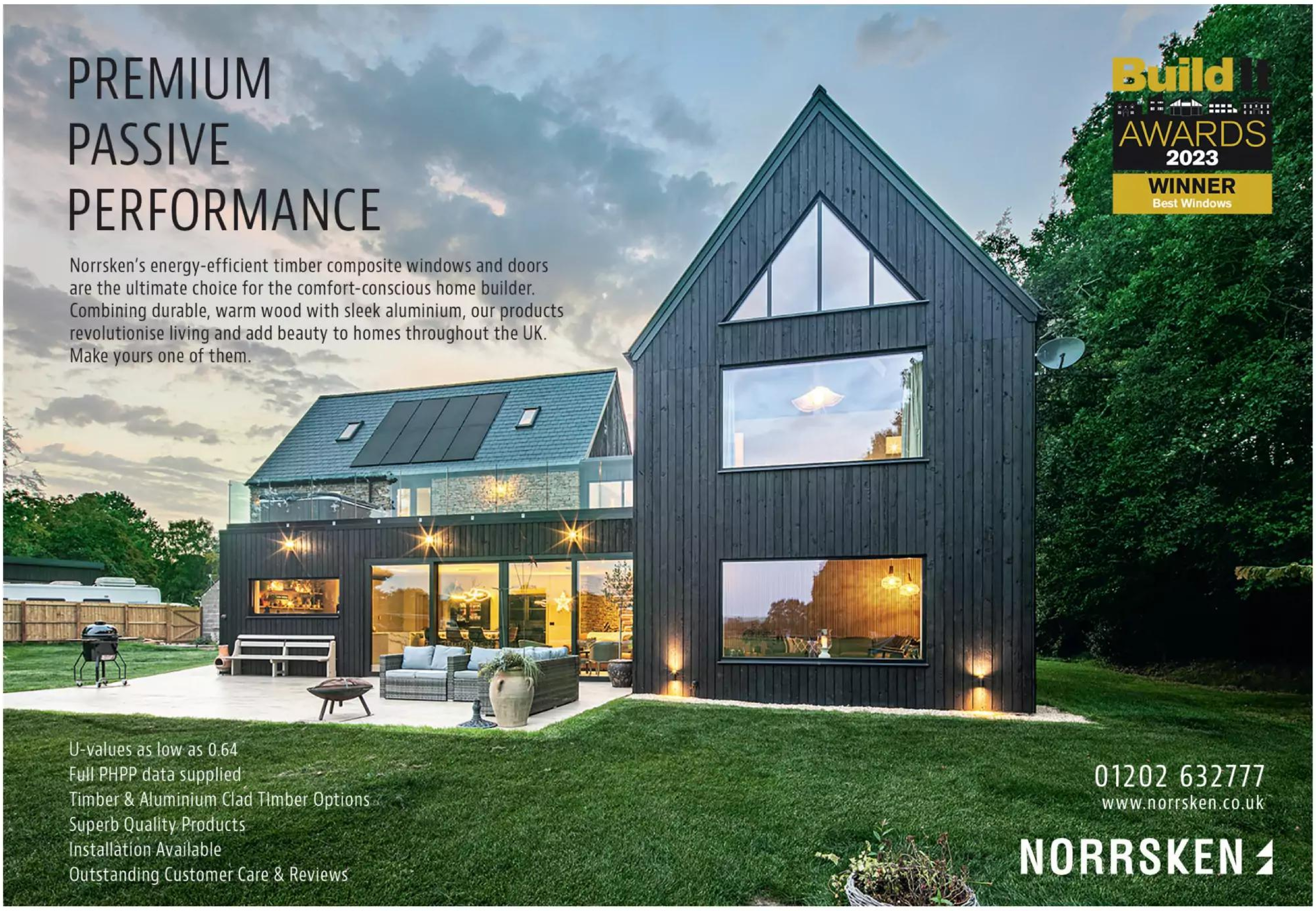
Laminated or engineered timber enhances stability and durability, making the windows much less prone to movement. It's an excellent insulator – approximately 1,000 times more effective than aluminium as a raw material – and, when engineered and encased in a protective layer of aluminium cladding, a timber window provides outstanding performance with minimal upkeep.

Q What should you expect to budget for a high-quality window setup?

A A range of factors affect the price of your product. Clients typically pay around 10-15% more for triple-glazed units than for the equivalent double-glazed model, but the 40-45% uplift in insulation performance leads many people to consider this a worthwhile investment.

The cost of windows varies from project to project, but as a general guide you should account for up to 10% of your overall budget in a typical domestic self build.

The size and shape affects its cost: curved, angled or other non-standard setups generally increase the price of a unit, and, of course, larger windows will increase your spending significantly. Big, heavy units can also impact your installation costs, often requiring specialist support.



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TIMBER DOORS

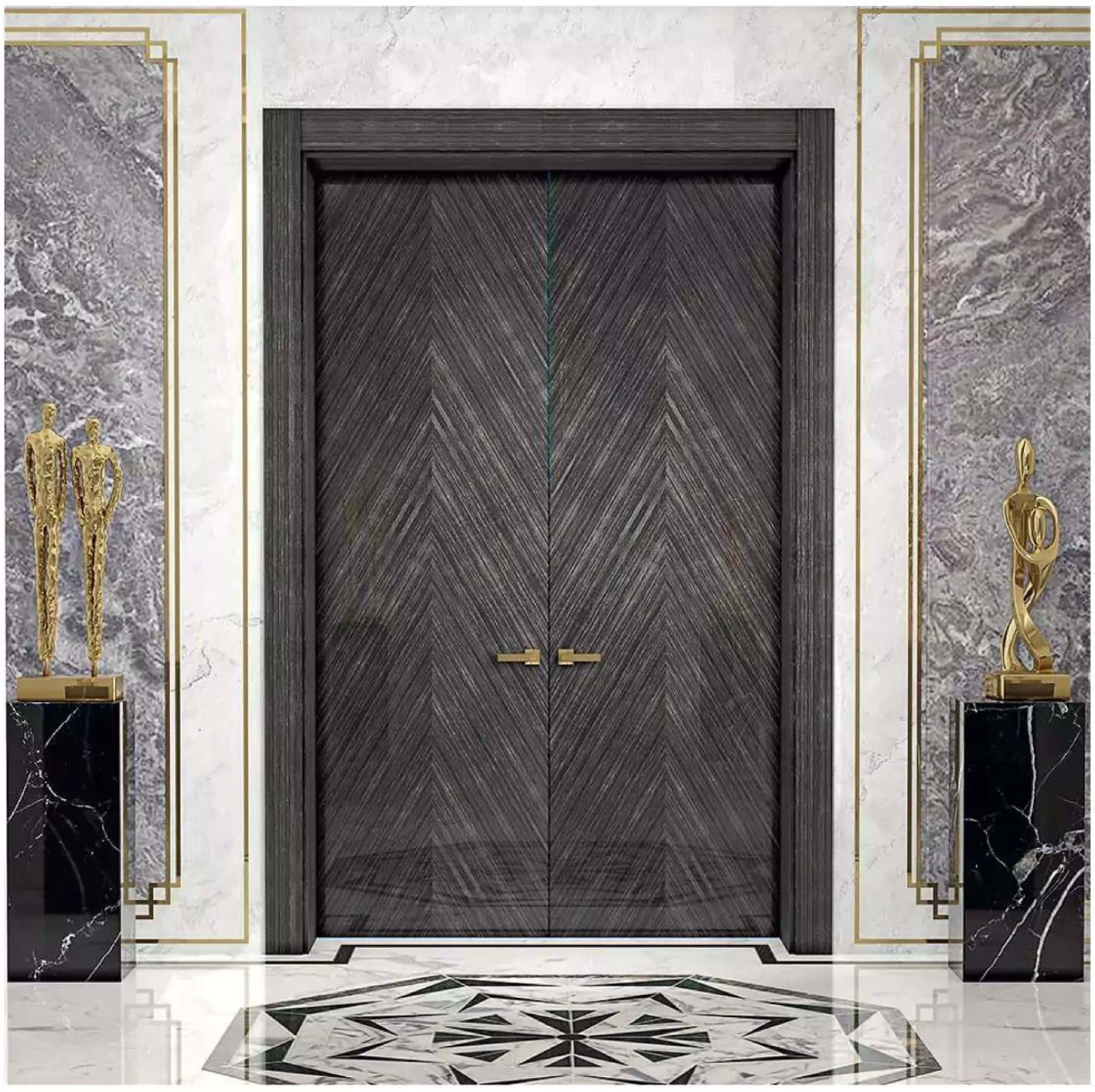
Specifying wooden doors for your home will enhance aesthetic appeal and character. Plus they're a durable, practical and functional choice for your self build or renovation

Wood has been the traditional material used for crafting doors for centuries; this staple option is valued for its strength, good looks and ability to be refinished. Whether you are choosing doors for their visual appeal, insulating properties or security benefits, timber remains one of the most versatile and practical choices for homeowners.

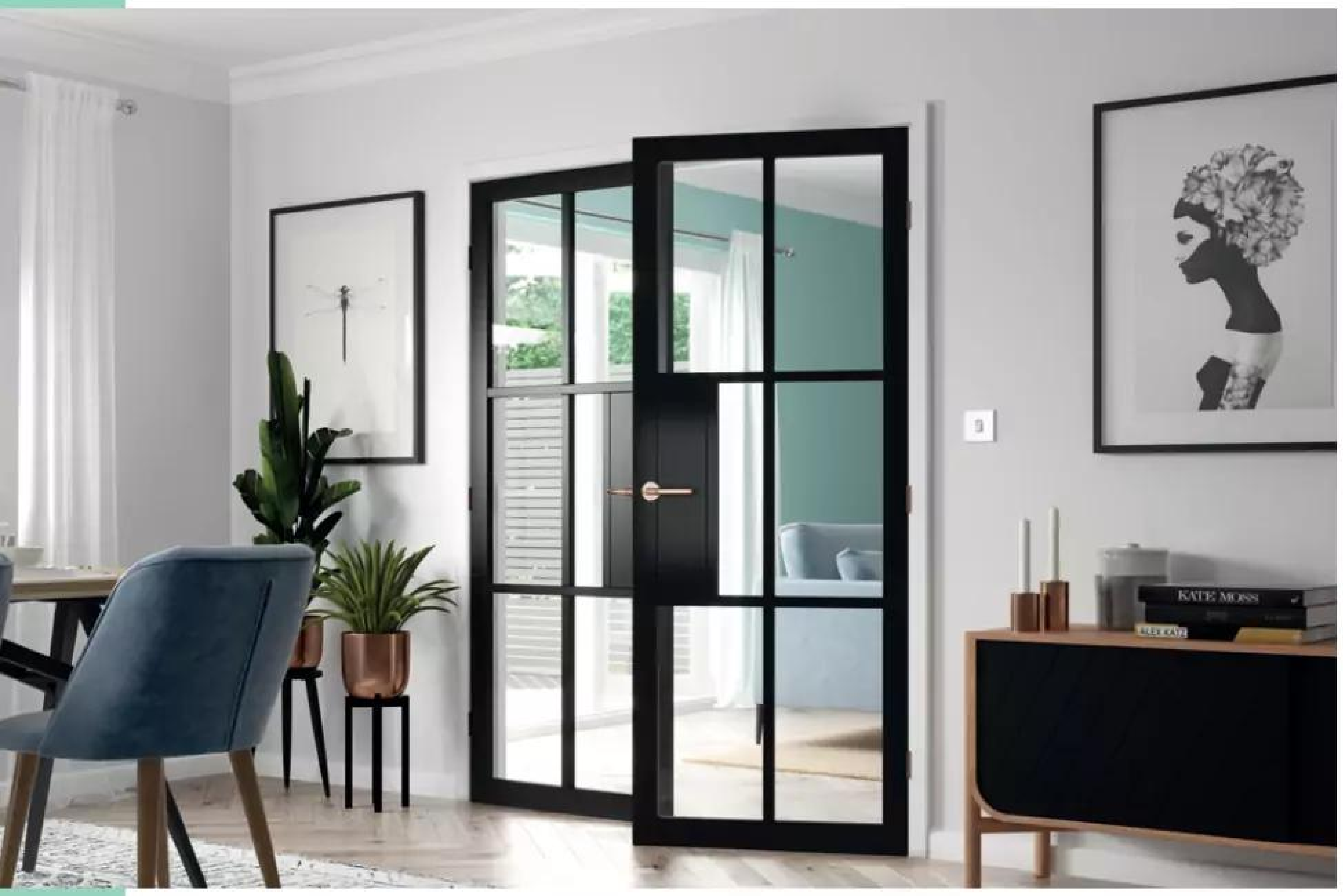
From grand entranceways to chic and minimal interior partitions, timber doors contribute plenty of warmth and character to a home – plus they add a great sense of craftsmanship. Thanks to modern engineering techniques, wooden doors now offer greater stability and insulation than ever before, making them a smart choice for self builds and renovations of all architectural styles.

Traditionally, front doors were constructed from solid timber. Today, advancements in manufacturing mean that many external units now feature engineered cores, improving their thermal performance, stability and resistance to warping. Some models also incorporate steel reinforcement for added security, ensuring they meet modern performance standards. This composite construction offers superior protection against the elements, while still showcasing the beauty of real wood.

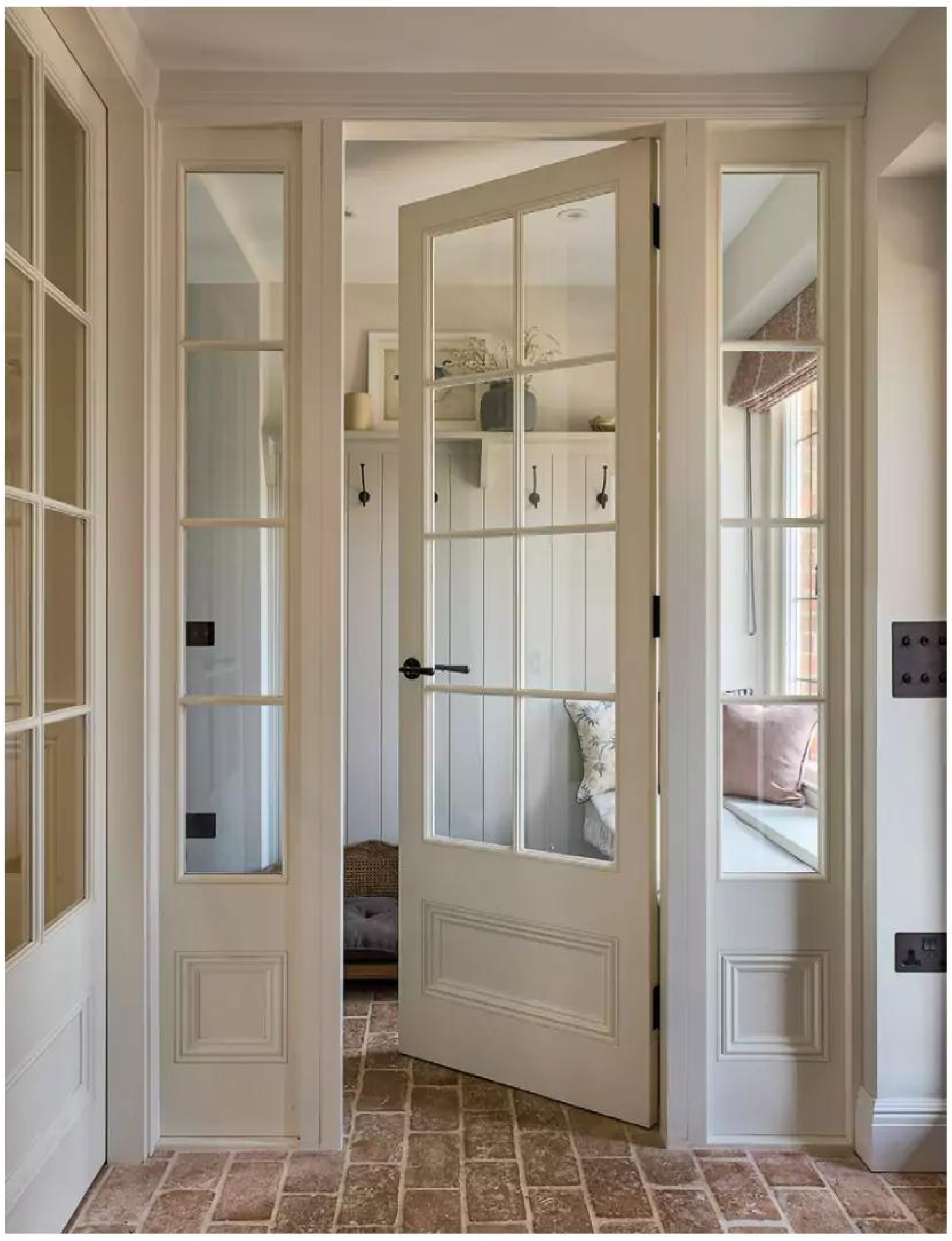
The engineered construction of modern timber doors helps minimise expansion and contraction caused by changing temperatures. As internal doors don't need to withstand the elements in the same way, there's a wider range of construction options available. Many homeowners opt for engineered or veneered designs that balance cost and durability. Timber and glass internal doors/screens have also become more popular, allowing natural light to flow between rooms, while retaining a sense of separation.



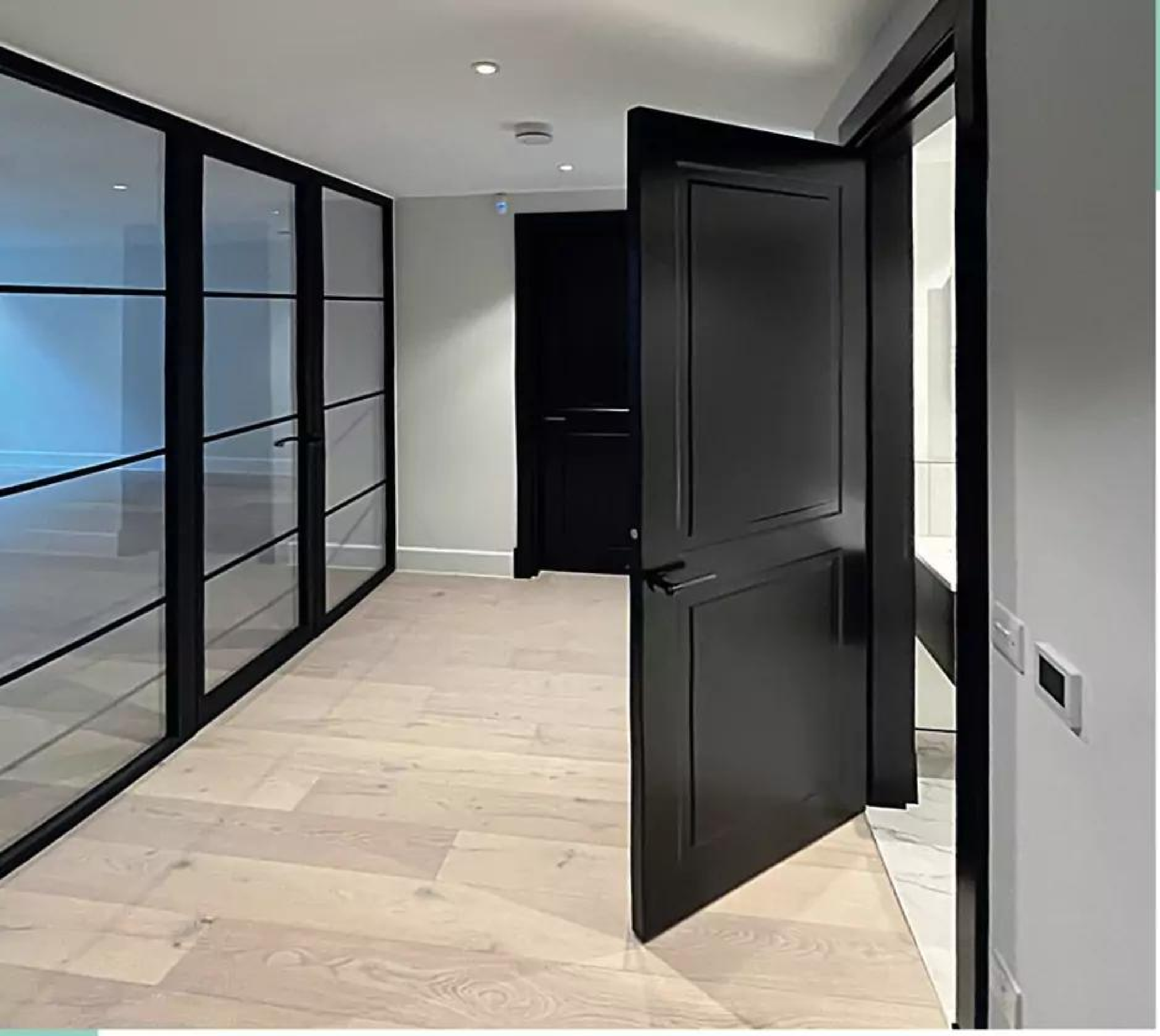
▲ Made from high-quality hardwoods and veneers, the San Rafael K43 is designed for lasting durability. Its anthracite timber veneer features a straight, uniform grain, allowing for the precisely detailed Chevron pattern. Available in single or double door configurations, there is also a FD30/FD60 fire-rated option. From **£560**. **(www.artisdoors.co.uk)**



▲The Civic Black clear glass door from JB Kind brings a bold industrial style. Featuring a black painted finish and clear flat safety glass panels, it allows light to flow between interior spaces. Built with a solid frame and lock blocks, it's designed for standard ironmongery, ensuring durability and ease of installation. A matching solid panel version is also available. **£POA**. **(www.jbkind.com)**



◀ Expertly crafted from engineered redwood, Westbury's internal glazed screen is made-to-measure, featuring eight elegant panes over a traditional panel, allowing light to flow seamlessly between rooms. The door is spray-coated with two layers of durable paint for a flawless finish, shown here in Westbury White. Prices start from **£2,200**. **(www.westburywj.com)**



Blending cutting-edge CNC machining with high-end craftsmanship, this two-panel internal door showcases intricate detailing. Factory pre-hung for precise alignment and closure, it incorporates premium concealed hinges, magnetic latches and flexible door seals for silent operation. **£1,400**. **(www.zakuna.co.uk)**

With a bold designer aesthetic and sustainable credentials, the Barn door from Urban Front makes a style statement. The door is crafted from reclaimed pine, imbuing it with a rich, rustic texture. The reclaimed wood, is used on one side only, allowing for a customised internal finish. Prices start from **£9,200**. **(www.urbanfront.com)**

Blending character with contemporary style, Kloeber's FunkyFront engineered timber door is sleek and modern. Available in oak or other hardwood panels and with frames in softwood, oak or hardwood, the made-to-measure design allows for a customised finish. Prices from **£2,430**. **(www.kloeber.co.uk)**

EXPERT VIEW

MATT HIGGS, *MD at Kloeber, answers your frequently asked questions to help you select the right front door for your home*

Q What's the difference between solid wood and engineered timber front doors?

A Solid wood doors are made from a single piece or large joined sections of timber. They showcase natural grain patterns, but can warp, crack or swell due to humidity and temperature changes. Kloeber uses engineered timber in pine, meranti and oak. Engineered timber consists of smaller strips of solid wood, laminated and glued together, creating stronger sections. This method reduces warping or shrinking by resisting moisture and temperature changes.

Q Are timber front doors energy efficient?

A Wood is a natural insulator, helping to keep your home warm in winter and cool in summer. Kloeber's FunkyFront door can achieve U-values of 1.2 W/m^2K. The core of the panel is packed with solid insulation and the perimeter, where the door meets the frame, is sealed with high compression gaskets, making the door super energy efficient. If the door has glass panels, double or triple glazing will enhance thermal performance.

Q Is installation straightforward?

A Yes, it should be! Our FunkyFront doors can be installed by a builder, carpenter or a keen DIYer. The door comes with full installation instructions, all fixings and fittings, and there is no carpentry work to do – just assembly, with pre-drilled pilot holes for every fixing.

Q What styles of timber front door work best for traditional and contemporary homes?

A Classic panelled doors, often with raised mouldings, suit period properties like Georgian, Victorian or Edwardian homes. Glazed timber doors with leaded, frosted or stained glass also work well for traditional schemes. Kloeber's timber KlassicFront offers a variety of panelled and glazed options in any RAL colour, classic styling with 21st century performance.

Contemporary homes suit timber doors with a minimal style and detail for a modern look. Horizontal or vertical grooved panel designs create a clean feel. Kloeber's timber FunkyFront is the perfect example of a sleek, contemporary entrance door, with a variety of panels, glazed options, minimal bar handles and dual-colour options to complement modern architecture.

Bridging period aesthetics with contemporary living, this Victorian-style internal door by Deuren has a double-leaf configuration. Finished in a crisp White RAL 9010, it's the perfect choice for those seeking classic detailing with modern craftsmanship. Prices start from **£1,700**. **(www.deuren.co.uk)**

Designed for light to medium use, the Velfac Ribo Wood entrance door is available in flush and glazed styles. It can be tailored with glass apertures, too, or divided glazing bars to maximise daylight. Built with FSC-certified pine, the laminated and finger-jointed frame ensures structural stability and sustainability. **£POA**. **(www.velfac.co.uk)**

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TIMBER STAIRCASES

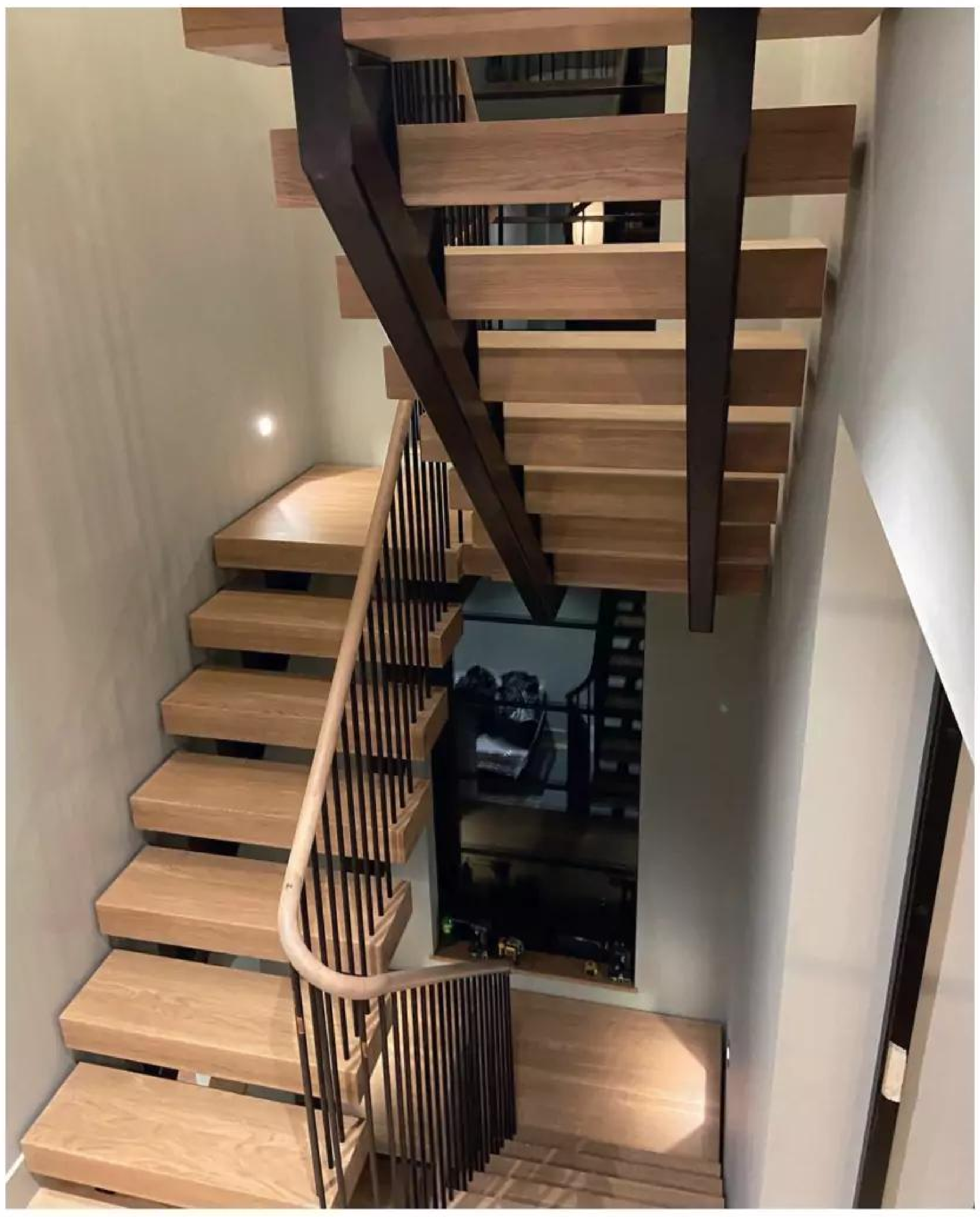
Looking to add a characterful, timeless centrepiece to your brand new home? Take inspiration from this collection of hand-picked timber flights

Investing in a staircase that meets your project's practical requirements and ties in with your home's architecture can completely transform a space and how you move around it on a day-to-day basis.

Staircases often take centre stage in a floorplan, and in many cases, they're the first thing you see when you walk through the front door. Not only do they have to serve a practical purpose in connecting storeys, but with careful planning and consideration, this feature can become an eye-catching focal point that helps consolidate your property's overall design.

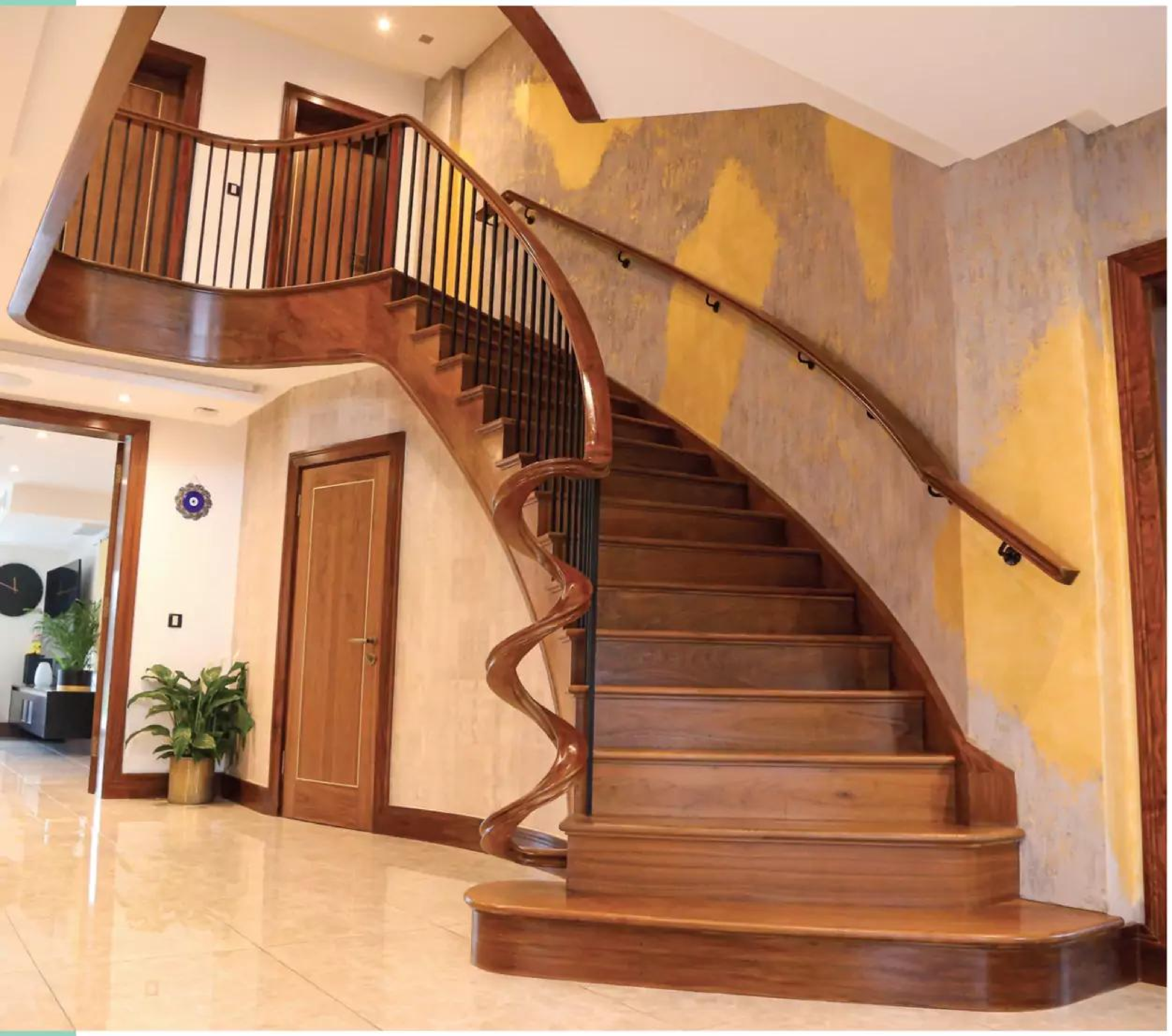
There are plenty of styles, materials and shapes that can be mixed and matched to create your perfect design. The versatility of timber means you can find an option that truly suits your own preferences and budget. For example, consider an oak flight with floating treads and a glass balustrade for optimal wow factor. Or, you could specify a charming recycled timber staircase with steel accents for a more rustic or industrial look – the options and combinations are aplenty.

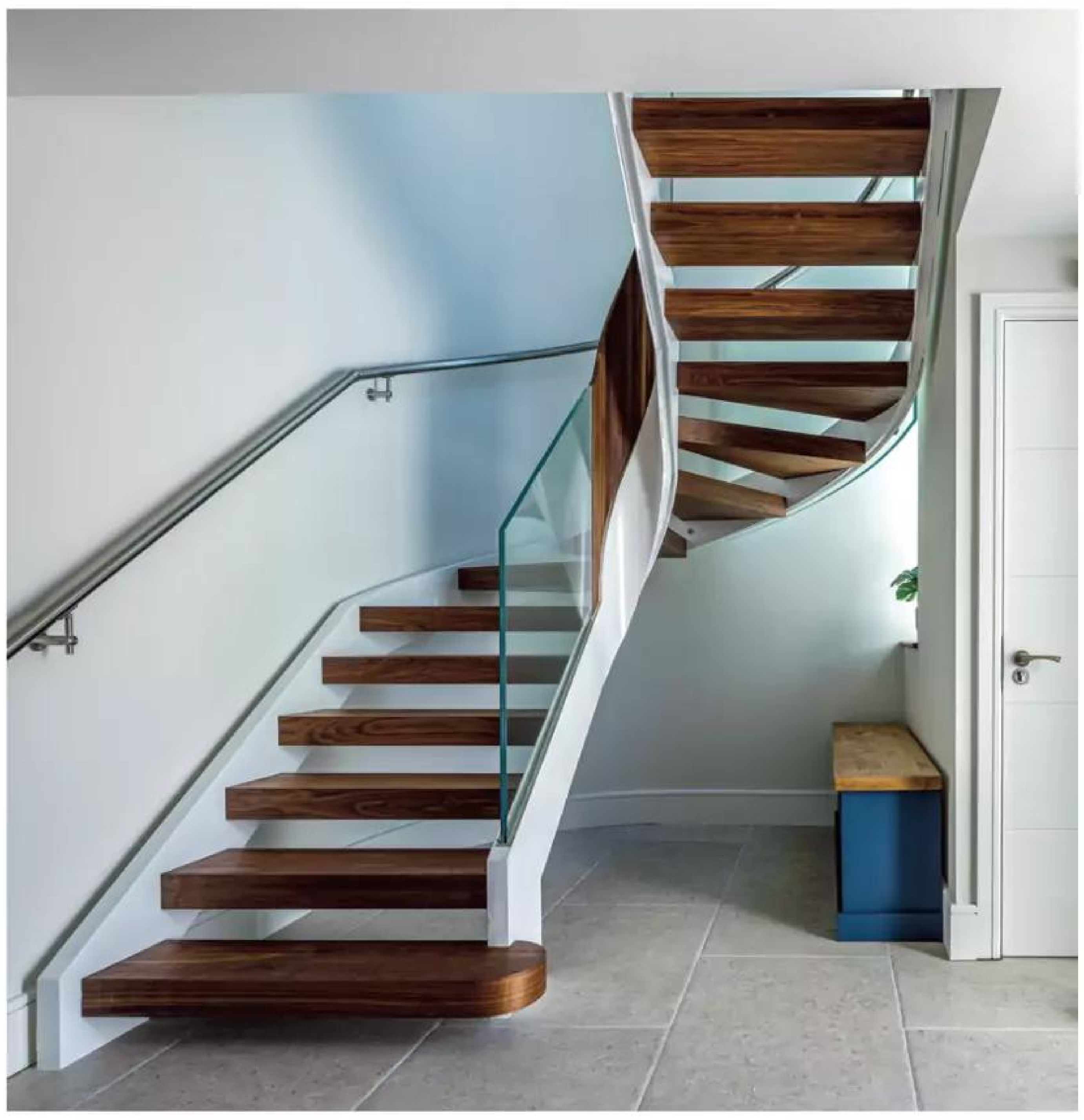
Factor in the space you have available and the shape of the staircase; this will dictate how it connects to the landing, plus whether you can use the space underneath for storage. Curved, spiral, cantilever and bifurcated (where the structure splits off into two) styles can add drama to a space, working particularly well in high-ceilinged entrance halls for a feeling of luxury. Take inspiration from this collection of unique timber designs.



▲This striking staircase by Zakuna features 110mm stained oak treads fixed on to the top of two black steel strings. The Z-shape flight has an open framework with a self-supporting design for a minimalist look. Black steel spindles are fixed to the treads and the continuous, round oak handrail is curved for a seamless flow. **(www.zakuna.co.uk)**

▼This stunning, three-storey solid black walnut staircase is a statement of luxury and craftmanship, featuring a continuous corkscrew handrail. 16mm spindles are paired with powder-coated, black solid mild steel details, ensuring a high-quality design tailored to the client's exact specifications. **(www.davidsmith.co.uk)**





▲ Jim and Lesley Driver replaced a poorly-insulated coastal bungalow with a highly-efficient ICF home, true to the area's Bauhaus roots. The couple designed a bespoke, standout U-shaped steel and walnut staircase for the scheme, which features glazed balustrades. It was crafted in parts by London Joinery. **(www.london-joinery.com)**

EXPERT VIEW

RICHARD McLANE, *founder and designer director at Bisca, answers your practical questions*

Q At what stage of a project should you engage a staircase manufacturer?

A It's important to get a specialist on board as early as possible. For a renovation, ideally as soon as the project is specified, as the structure will have a large impact on all aspects of design when modernising or updating the interior. A specialist will bring a fresh perspective and valuable experience to the project to help you choose between the options and design details on offer.

For a new build, it is wise to involve an expert from the planning stages, before anything physical or structural is agreed. It's quite common, however, for the details to be considered later in the process and for a client to make contact once the architectural designs have been confirmed. In this case, a bespoke staircase designer, like Bisca, will have the experience to work with existing configurations and maximise the space's potential.

Q What should you consider when deciding on the size, location and placement of your staircase?

A The scale of the house and integral features, such as the ceiling height and window size, are important factors. It's key to ensure the staircase fits proportionately within the overall space and is not either too overpowering or too underwhelming; but more so it offers a balance between its prominence and other attractive features in the building.

Experienced design engineers will tell you form always follows function. And so, a staircase's functional purpose is the first important consideration when looking at where it will be situated. How will people move around your home and how does light travel from one space to another? Are you after a statement staircase within a central area or hallway, where its aesthetics can enhance the interior design scheme; or is there a view you want to capture?

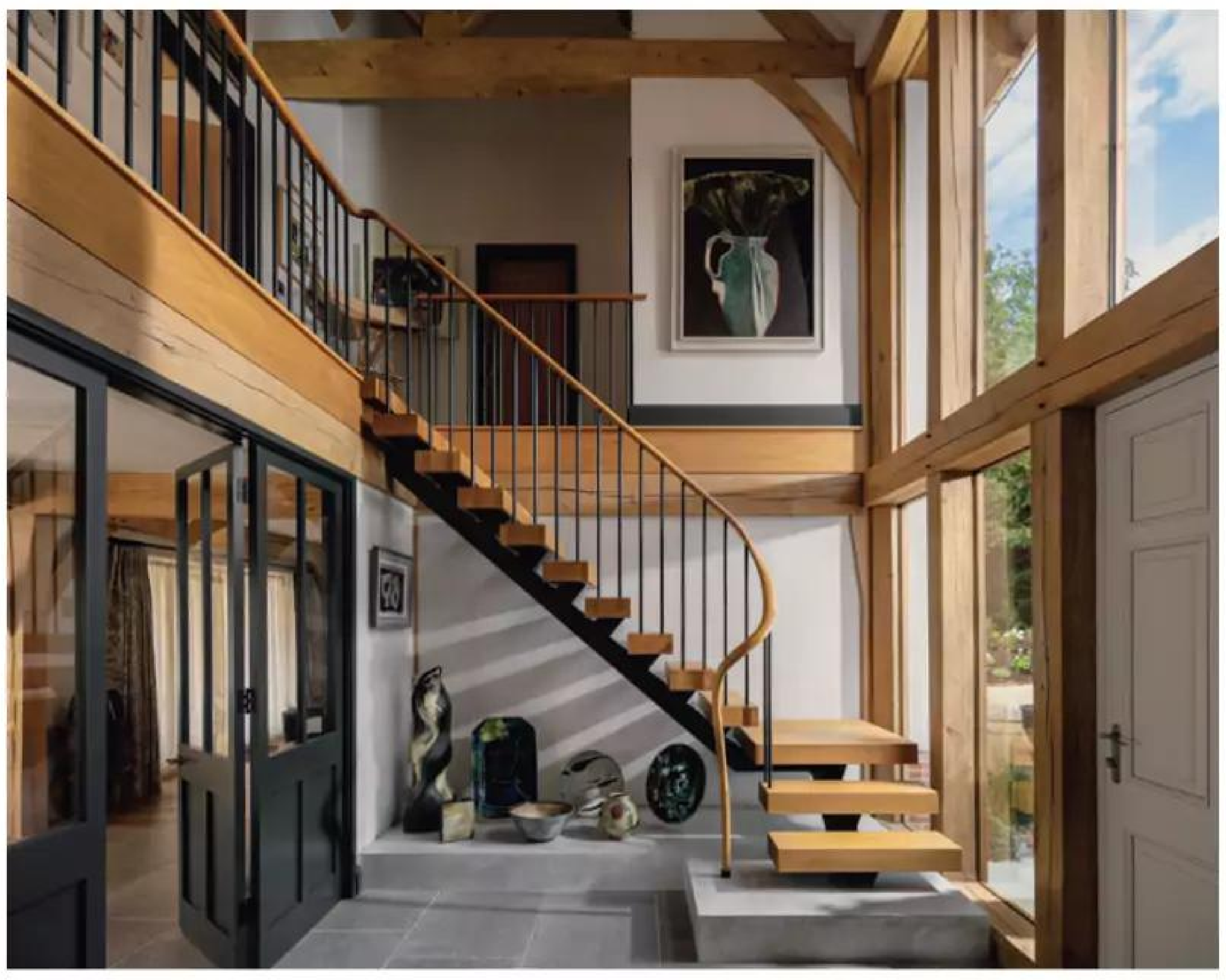
Ultimately, the placement of a staircase should optimise comfort in every respect. Considering the size of the rise of each tread will determine its direction and how it's attached to the building. Some spaces are more compact and therefore impose limitations on where a staircase can be placed. In these circumstances, a creative mindset is needed, looking at different layouts and styles.

Q What should you consider in terms of staircase safety and Building Regs?

A There are various practical regulations that must legally be followed throughout the initial design, manufacture and installation stages of a staircase project. In our 30 years of experience, one of our first considerations when it comes to safety and Building Regulations would be the height and design of a balustrade. While legislation guides us, our specialist knowledge means we know where there is flexibility in what can be achieved; helping us maximise comfort without infringing on essential safety criteria.

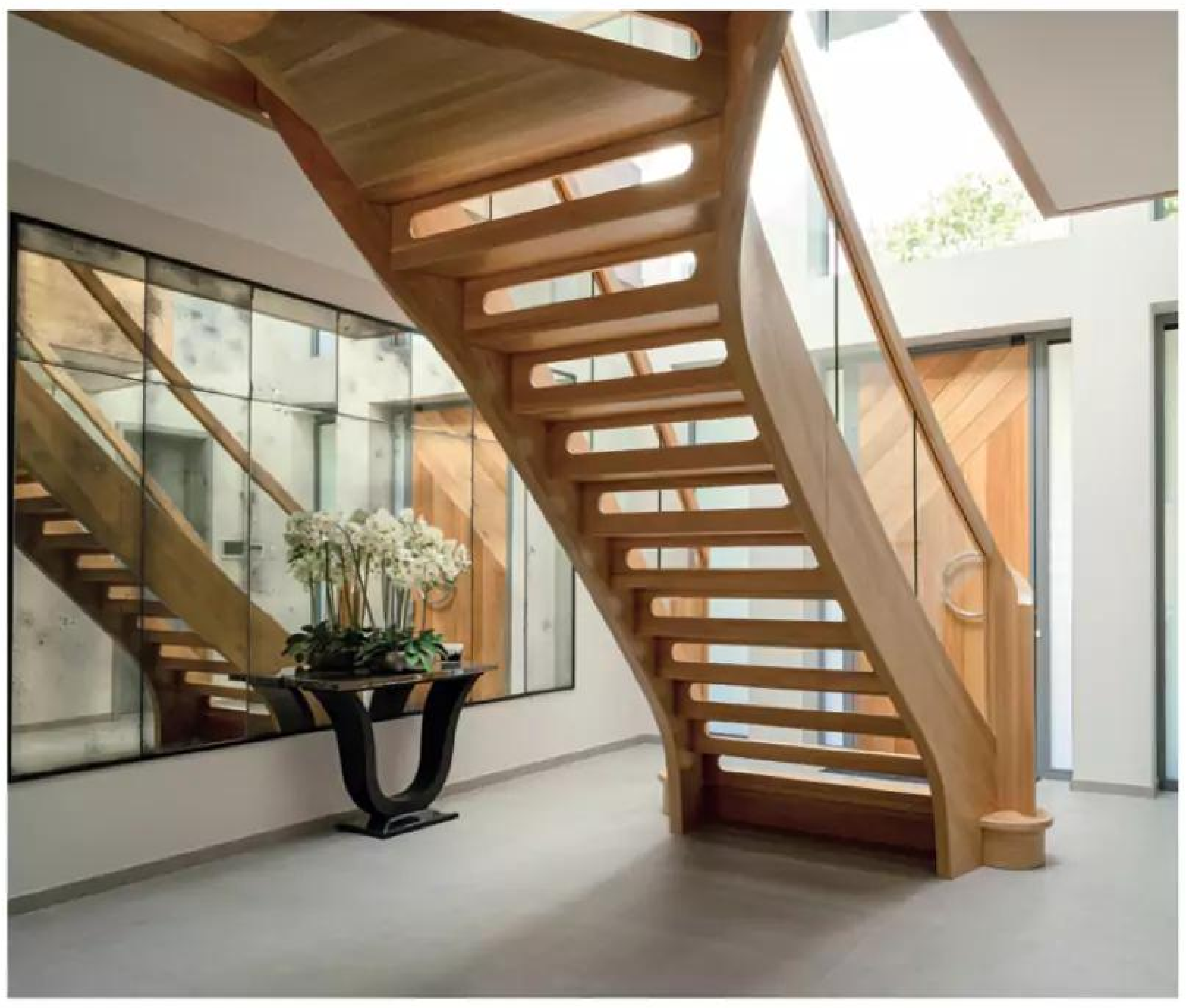
We will consider the characteristics of the property and style of the staircase; a multi-flight structure, for example, often demands a slightly raised balustrade in comparison to a smaller, more compact design. The finish of the staircase tread is also critical to its safety – tiles are all-the-rage, however they are not so practical underfoot. Many hard surfaces can be treated to create a degree of friction, so selecting wood, glass or stone with a grain or textured effect can minimise potential tripping hazards.

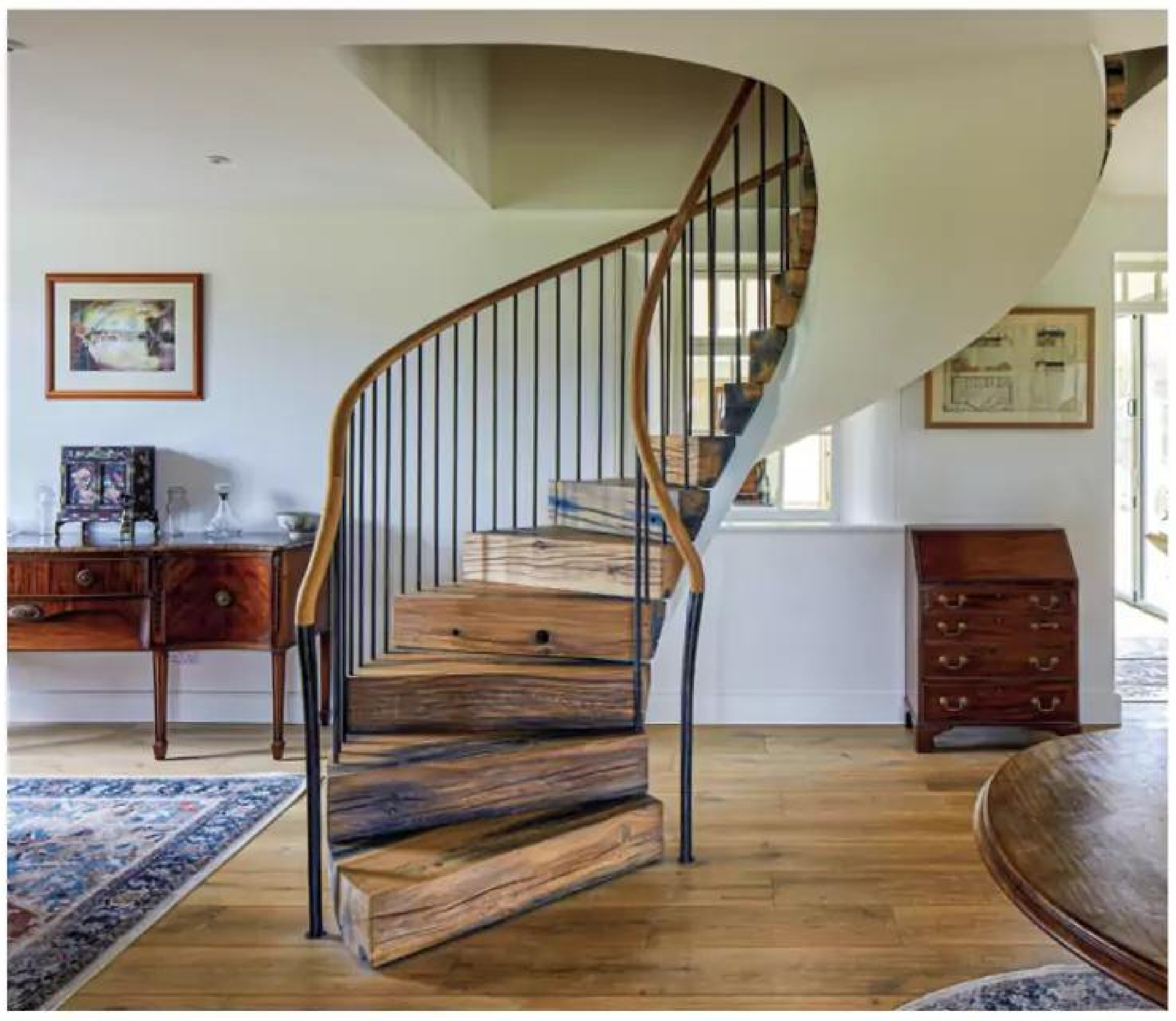
It's important to avoid 'pocket catchers' in your design, too, as the angles at which you access or travel up/down a staircase can vary significantly.



◀ Winner of the 2024 Build It Award for Best Staircase, this sculptural design by First Step Designs makes a grand statement in this home's hallway. The flight is meticulously detailed, with solid metal spindles and 112mm European white oak treads, sourced from FSC-certified suppliers in Italy. **(www.firststepdesigns.com)**

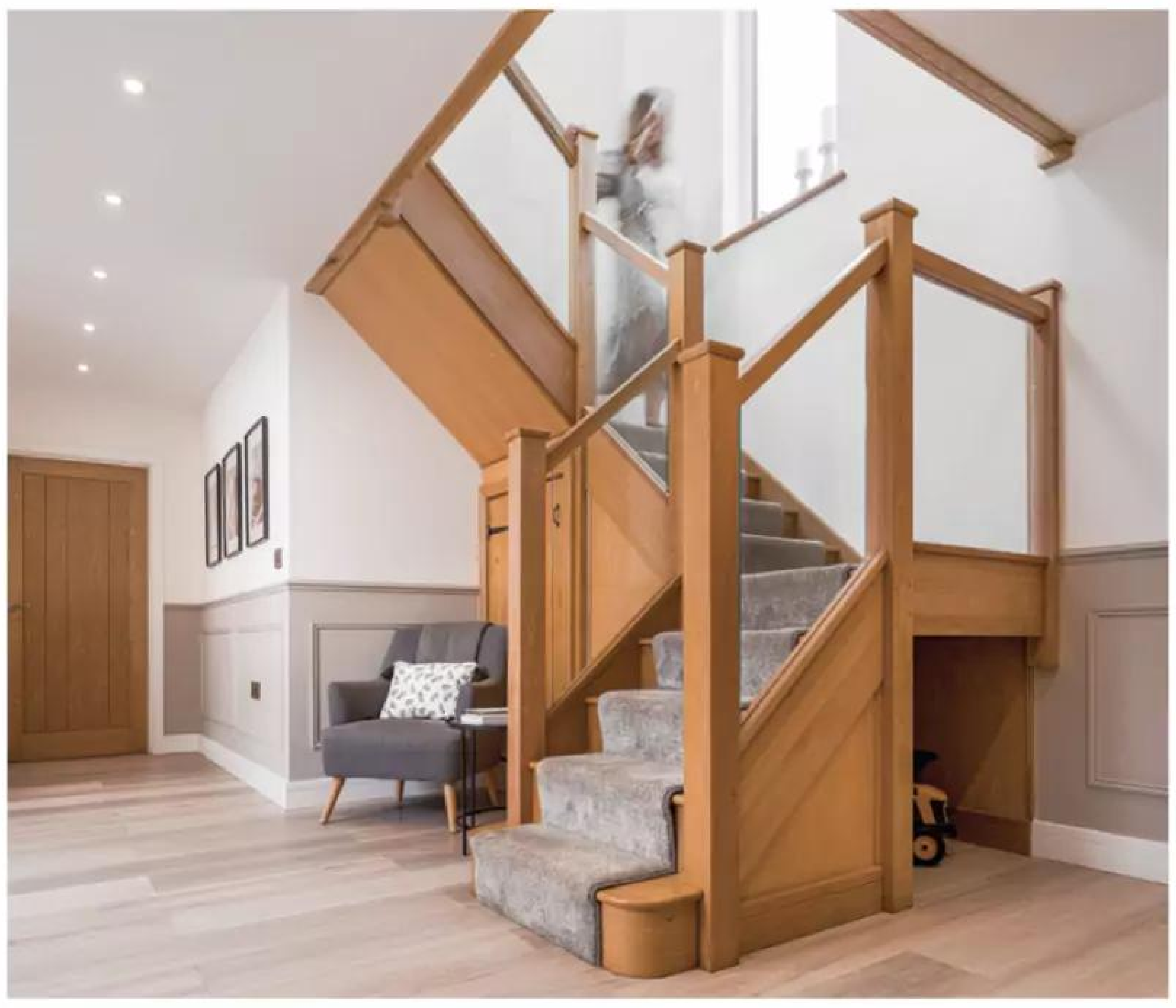
Crafted using ▶ European oak for a sturdy, self-supporting design, this scheme by Max Stairs features wow-factor oval-shaped risers to ensure light can flow throughout the home's entrance. Toughened, laminated glass panels and curved newel posts work together to make a modern statement. **(www.max-stairs.co.uk)**





◀ This 2023 Build It Award-winning recycled timber staircase was created by Bisca for a barn conversion, forming a dramatic design feature in the home's traditional-style living space. A slim, white-painted structure with a sweeping plastered soffit to the underside supports the oak treads. Bisca hand-carved each tread out of old lock gates, moulding the timber to the exact shape and size needed. **(www.bisca.co.uk)**

Designed and ▶ installed by Stairbox, this oak flight features two quarter landings and a plush grey carpet runner for a cosy feel. The staircase features an embedded glass balustrade with timber posts. **(www.stairbox.com)**



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TIMBER CLADDING

Balancing great aesthetics with impressive performance values, explore the benefits of wood-based external finishes for enhancing your home's style and efficiency

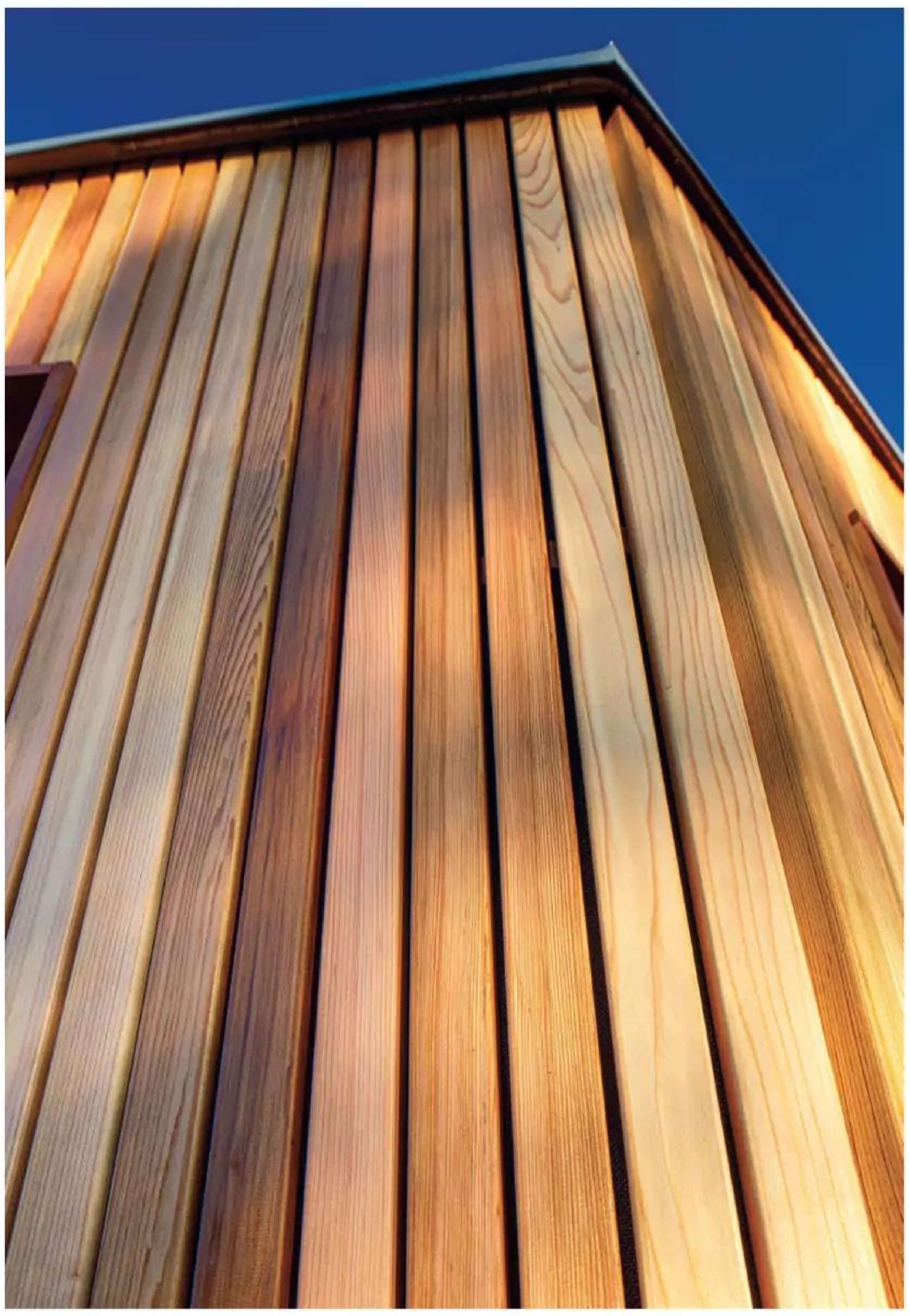
Timber cladding is a great option for transforming the exterior of your home, elevating its visual appeal and adding character while enhancing performance. As a natural material, timber offers unique warmth and texture that blends beautifully with a range of architectural styles and locations. Beyond aesthetics, this cladding solution offers a multitude of practical benefits, such as improved insulation and weather protection, making it a sustainable and versatile option for your home's exterior. For the best results, selecting high-quality timber and finishes is key to ensuring durability and long-lasting aesthetic appeal.

Modern treatments and manufacturing techniques mean timber cladding can withstand the elements while requiring minimal maintenance. Whether you prefer the natural grain and warmth of untreated wood or the clean, sleek look of painted or stained finishes, there's a wide range of styles to choose from. From horizontal and vertical planks to intricate shiplap or tongue-and-groove designs, this cladding material offers endless opportunities for customisation, allowing you to create a facade that complements your home beautifully.

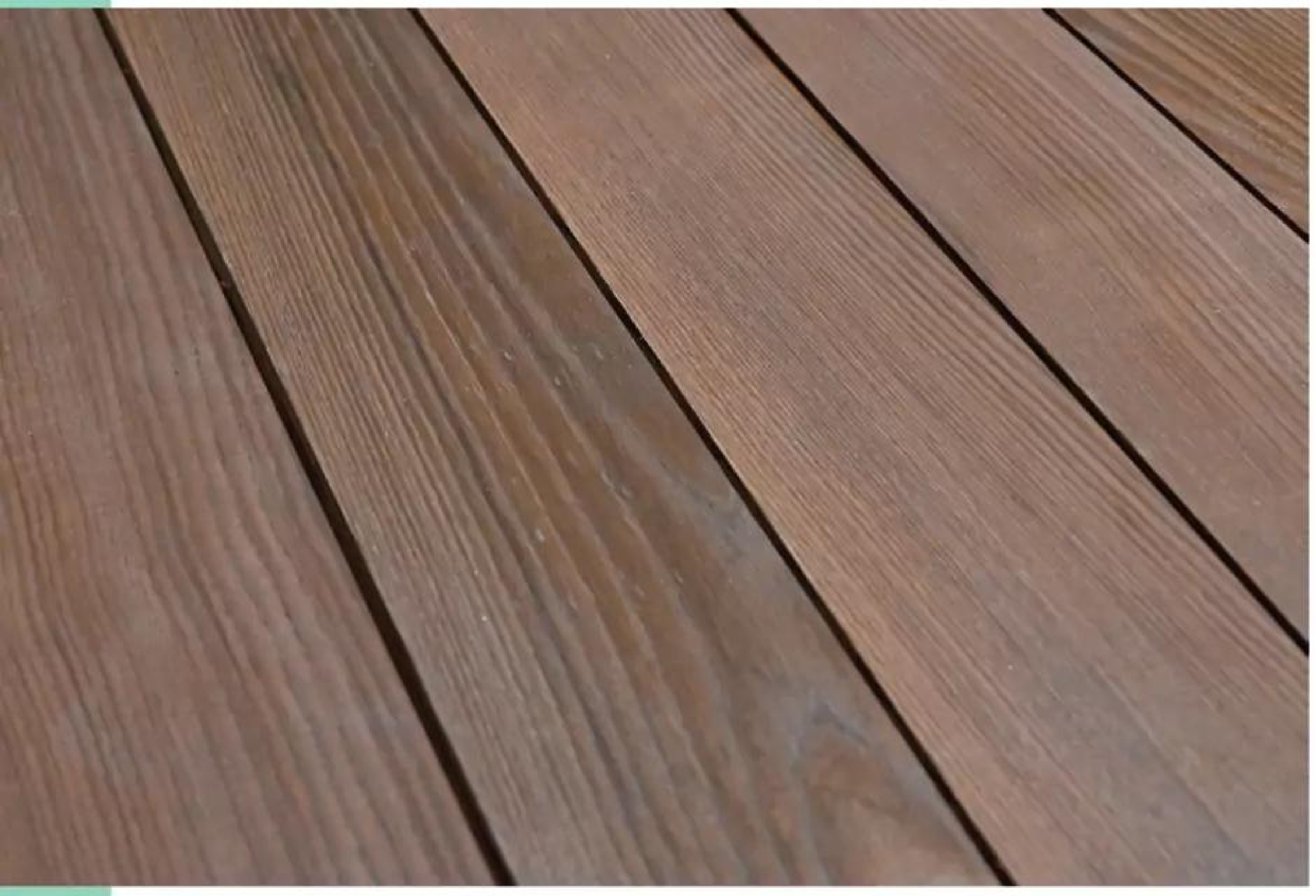
To make the most of the aesthetic and functional benefits, it's important to consider your choice of wood, finishes and installation techniques during the design stage. Consulting with a specialist can help you find the right combination of materials, finishes and laying patterns to meet your project goals. Take a look at some popular timber cladding designs that showcase how this versatile material can transform your home's exterior while enhancing its performance and charm.

▲Available in a range of colours, including pre-weathered grey for a soft silver finish right from installation, the New Age range of SivalBP Nordic pine cladding from Vincent Timber uses a thermally modified Scandinavian pine, offering exceptional durability of up to 50 years. Coatings are all solvent-free and anti-UV to create a water-repellent finish. You can expect pay from **£45 per m². (www.vincenttimber.co.uk)**

▲This cladding option from Russwood is crafted from thermally modified Radiata pine – a sustainably sourced, fast-growing timber. When heat-treated, the wood benefits from enhanced stability and durability, creating a high-performance exterior solution. The Abodo Vulcan vertical grain cladding starts from **£90 per m²**. Coatings add around **£20-25 per m². (www.russwood.co.uk)**



◀Millworks' Western red cedar is expertly graded and custom cut in-house to suit your home's requirements. Naturally stable and with minimal shrinkage, its low density allows for easy installation while providing excellent insulating properties, helping to improve the overall energy efficiency of your property. With rich colouring ranging from light amber to deep reddish-brown, it can be factory coated with MillCoat UV wood stain for long-lasting vibrancy and protection. Prices start from **£80 per m². (www.millworks.co.uk)**



◀ UK Hardwoods' thermally modified ash timber cladding is manufactured for excellent durability, weather-resistance and an impressive low-maintenance finish. The wood is heated to extremely high temperatures, enhancing its resistance to decay, rot and insect damage. This design costs **£65 per m^2. (www.ukhardwoods.co.uk)**

Thermally modified ▶ and manufactured from British grown poplar wood, Brimstone poplar cladding from Vastern is durable, stable and beautiful. It's relatively free from knots and super lightweight. The modification process removes most natural extractives resulting in consistent weathering. This versatile design option starts from **£71 per m^2. (www.vastern.co.uk)**

◀ Vincent Timber's VTX Redwood timber cladding is PEFC certified. Left exposed, VTX zero treated timber will begin to weather to a characterful silver-grey, ideal for those wanting to showcase the softer, natural tones of the material. This design offers an even spread of knots throughout, starting at **£30 per m^2. (www.vincenttimber.co.uk)**

▲ Combining excellent stability and durability with the beauty of natural wood, Accoya cladding is designed to help you achieve both the look and the performance you're after. The modified pine is sustainably sourced and comes with a 50 year warranty for peace of mind that your home's exterior will hold up over time. **(www.accoya.com)**

EXPERT VIEW

RICH ROSE, *sales and project development advisor at Russwood, shares his expertise on specifying your ideal timber cladding*

Q When should you start thinking about your cladding during a project?

A The sooner the better. Begin by asking yourself some questions to help guide your choice. Do you want sharp, clean lines or a more rustic appearance? Do you prefer a coloured finish or a natural look? Will horizontal or vertical boards look best? Once you know the look you want to achieve, it's easier to narrow down your options. We also recommend taking a look at a selection of real-life projects to help with inspiration.

Q What are the key considerations when specifying the right cladding?

A Start by exploring which wood species is best suited to your location, aesthetic aspirations, property profile and budget. It's also vital to investigate the sustainability credentials of your chosen material – all of our timber is FSC or PEFC approved, meaning it is sourced from responsibly managed forests.

On a practical level, a well-ventilated structure increases the lifespan of cladding by allowing the timber to dry out quickly and completely in between spells of rain. Poorly ventilated boards on the other hand, can swell, cup or twist and push against each other causing them to lift and ultimately fail. Plus, improper detailing can lead to a range of issues, from unsightly blemishes to structural damage such as rot.

Q How is timber cladding installed?

A Proper installation is fundamental to performance, longevity and appearance. The process involves fixing the cladding boards to battens, which are attached to the wall. Russwood battening systems offers a non-toxic, chemical free solution, making them an environmentally friendly alternative to standard softwood versions, which include preservatives. We always recommend using stainless steel screws for effective and neat detailing. Kompefix reduces wood to wood contact and allows additional ventilation, plus some flexibility for any seasonal movement.

Q What is the design potential?

A Timber cladding offers exceptional design flexibility to suit a range of property styles and locations. It's traditionally installed horizontally, but we have seen an increase in vertical arrangements, and even some diagonal. You can also add visual interest by introducing mixed widths or thicknesses. A recent trend we've noticed is for two tone cladding, mixing coated timber in different colours, or choosing to have some areas left uncoated to weather naturally. Black cladding with our contrasting SiOO:X mid grey has proven popular.

Q What will help determine your costs?

A Your budget will depend on a few varying factors, such as species choice – a clear grade timber will cost more; surface finish – embossing, brushed or Microtex are extra processes that can alter the aesthetics or improve coating performance; arrangement – secret fix overlapping boards, mixed width, open rainscreen or larger fin sections; coatings such as SiOO:X, WOCA oil or Teknos will incur additional costs. It's important to also consider the cost of the maintenance for reapplication, if any, as well as added extras, such as fire retardant treatments, if required.

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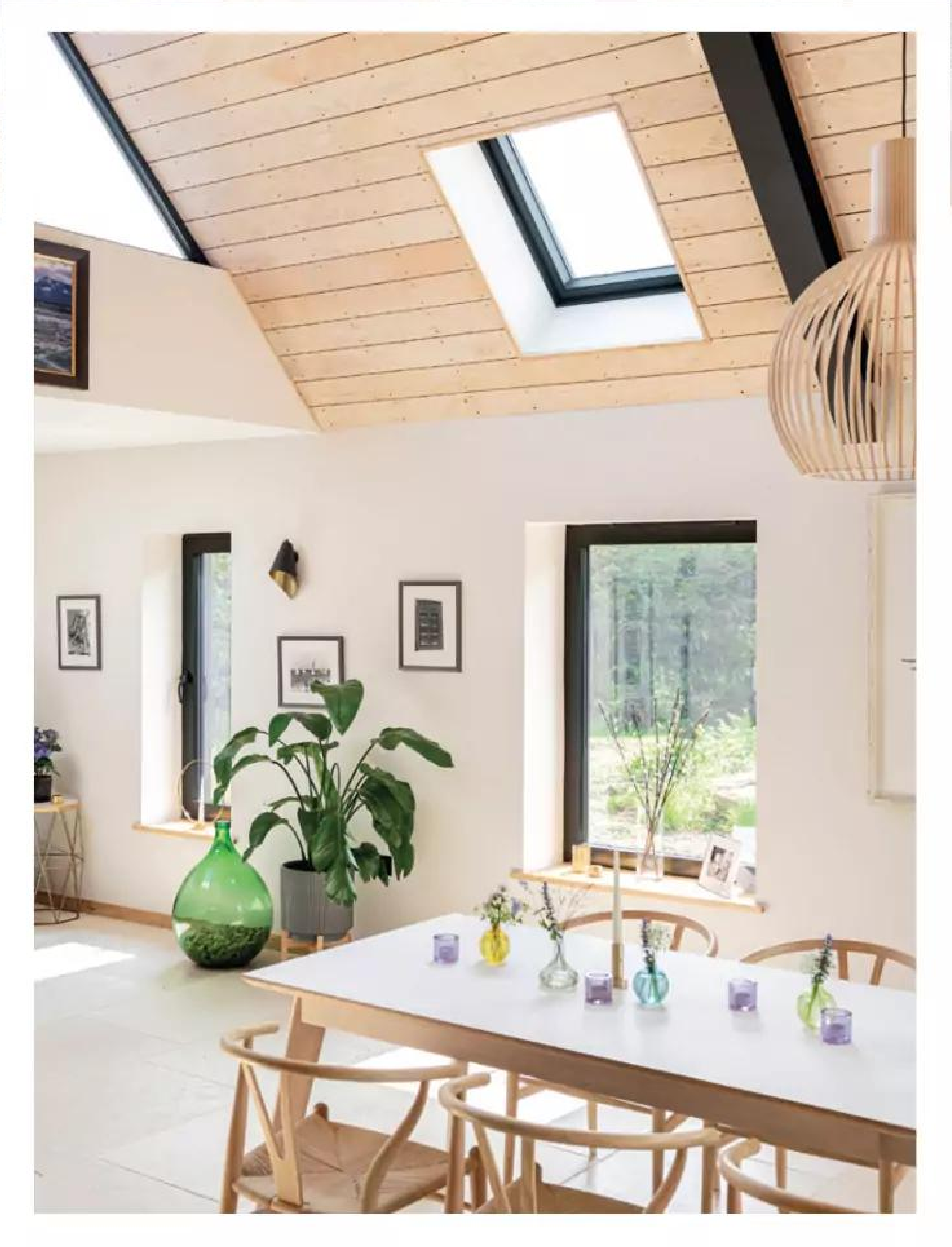

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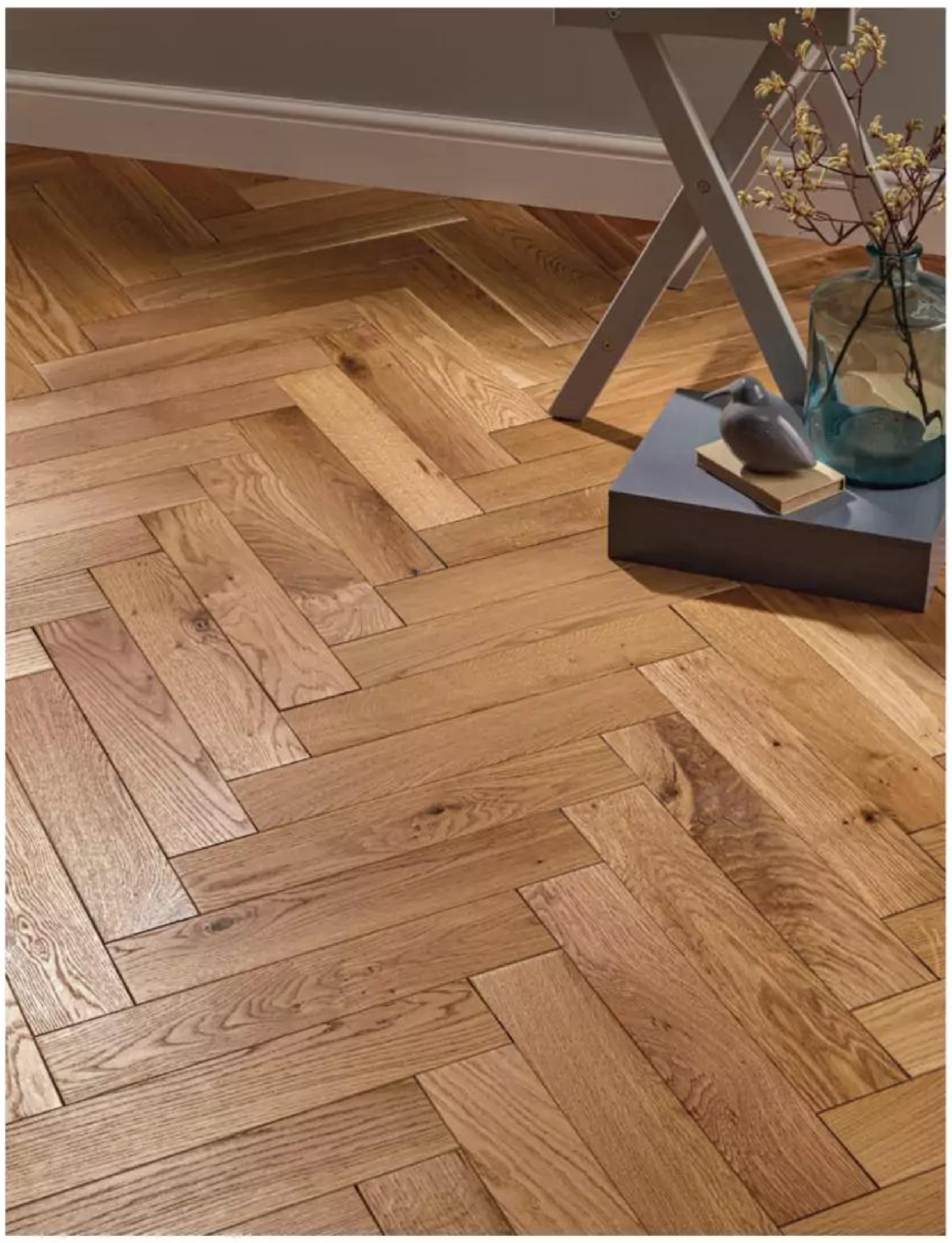
TIMBER FLOORING

Wood provides an attractive, timeless solution for your home's interior finishes – but which type should you specify underfoot? Here are the options

Wood flooring is a favourite among self builders and renovators kitting out their homes – and it's easy to understand why. Well cared for, it's a durable solution that can last for decades. Plus, there's a huge array of timber species and finishes to choose from, depending on the interior aesthetic you want to create.

When specifying wood flooring, a lot depends on where you're planning to install it and whether you intend to fit underfloor heating (UFH). Engineered boards offer superior stability thanks to their cross-layered core, so are better-suited to UFH, as well as for use in kitchens and bathrooms. They're generally slightly cheaper than solid planks, too, though prices vary significantly depending on species, board size and supplier.

Solid boards do have advantages – they can be refinished many times, for instance, so provide excellent longevity. They also tend to offer a more authentic look for heritage-style or period home projects. Typically, engineered boards can only be sanded two or three times before it's time to replace them.



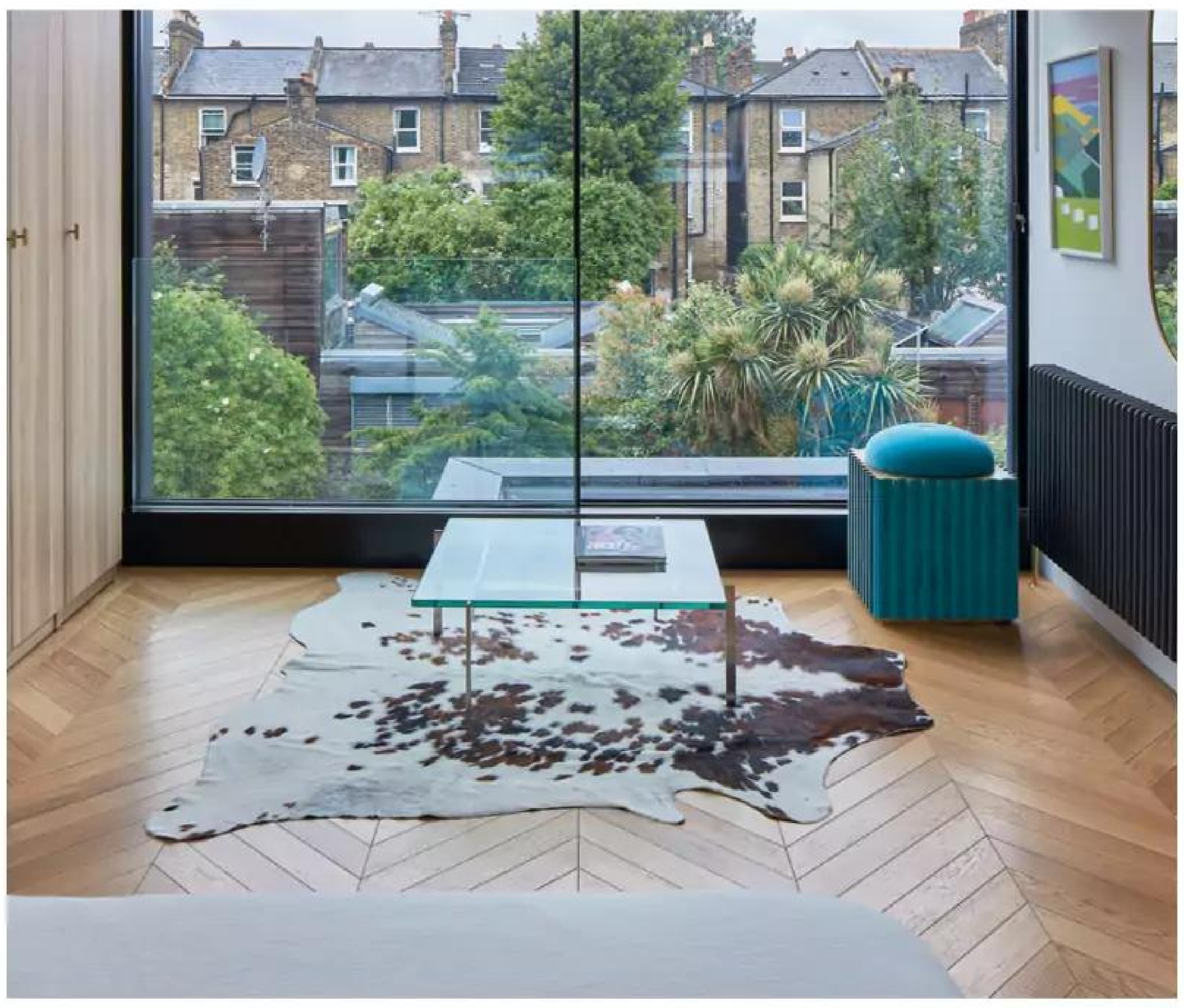
▲Priced at £99.99 per m², this Park Avenue natural oak flooring from Flooring Superstore is laid in an elegant herringbone pattern. The warm honey and toffee-coloured tones of the wood complement the knots and grain patterns across its surface. An oiled finish helps to ensure its longevity.

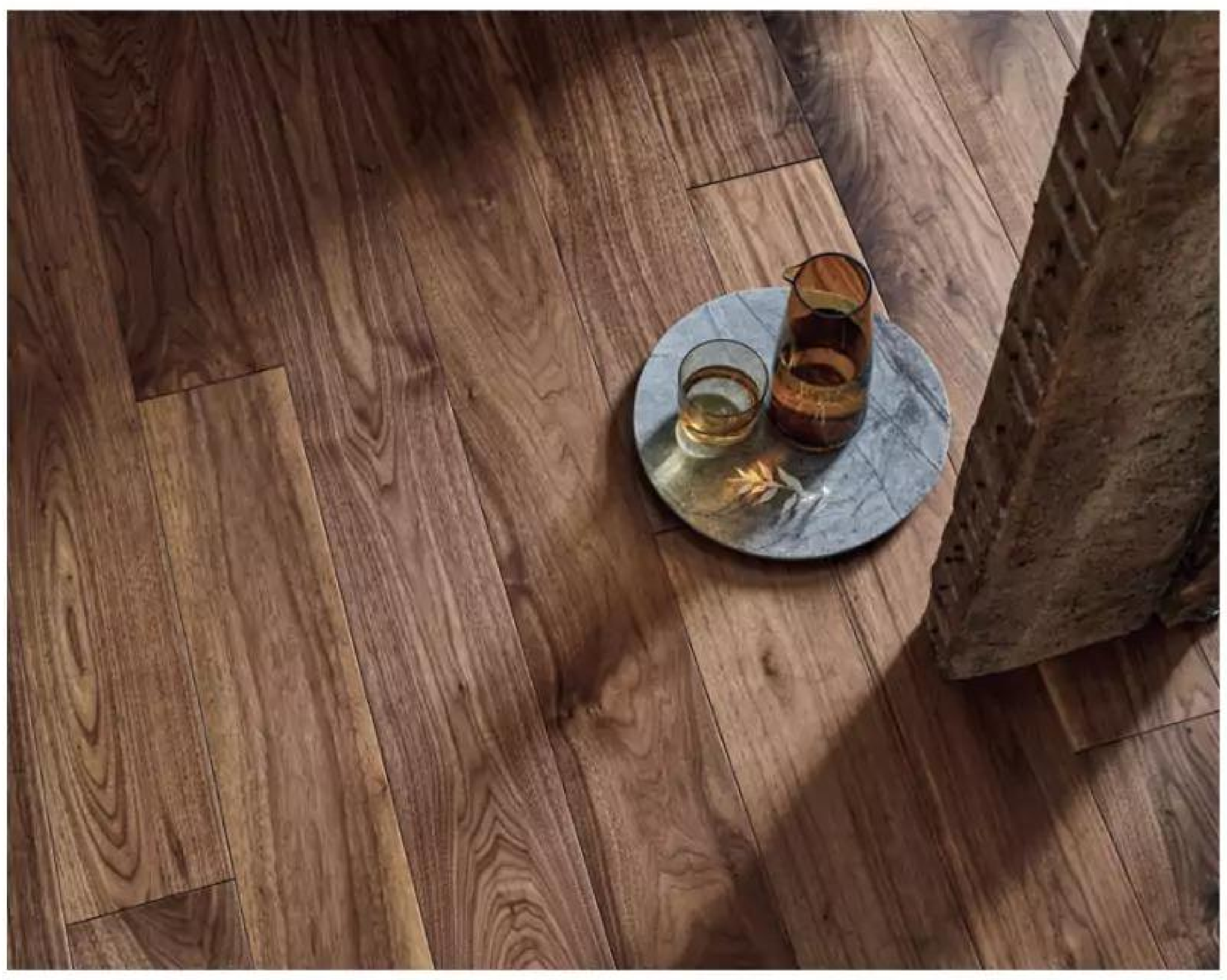
▲Priced at £121 per m², Premier Unsealed oak is an engineered product from the Natural Wood Floor Co. It has a board width of 240mm and a 5mm-deep hardwood top layer, which means it can be sanded and refinished after years of use.

▲Coppice and Crown's chestnut flooring is priced from around £65 per m². Featuring pale straw tones along with rich, chocolate-hued ripples, it offers a warm yet subtle finish with fewer knots than many other wood species.

This barn-grade English ash is from Vastern Timber, priced at £54 per m^2 on a supply-only basis. Ash is a pale yet attractively-figured wood, suitable for most rooms in the house barring the most heavily-used areas, such as the entrance hall.

European oak flooring laid in a striking chevron pattern gives this bedroom oodles of contemporary wow factor. The matt lacquered finish covers the pores of the timber, providing a durable, resilient coating that protects the wood beneath from dirt and moisture ingress. Havwoods Pallido chevron flooring is priced at £97.95 per m^2.





Woodpecker Flooring supplied this Berkeley Classic walnut engineered wood flooring. The timber is well-loved for its smooth, chocolatey tones. Priced at £150 per m^2, these boards feature a top wear layer of 4mm in depth, with a lacquered finish on top.

Supplied by Russwood, this European mountain larch flooring in Frost White is priced from £62.35 per m^2. The boards feature a lightly brushed finish, resulting in a hardwearing textured surface with a unique grain and characterful knots, and are pre-finished in a hardwax oil for durability.

EXPERT VIEW

TOM BARNES, *managing director at Vastern, shares his top tips on how to specify timber flooring for your home*

Q What types of wood floor suit different rooms?

A Think about the wear and tear and level of use that the area will receive. For instance, oak is hard and ideal for heavy use areas, whereas ash is a bit softer and therefore better suited to bedrooms. If UFH is specified, we'd recommend engineered flooring, due to the risk of excessive shrinkage with solid wood.

Q Who should install my wood floor?

A To lay a solid hardwood floor, we'd always recommend you employ a flooring contractor with experience of sanding and sealing floors. Your supplier will normally be able to recommend a tried-and-tested professional.

Excess moisture from concrete screed and plaster will cause problems with all hardwood floors. So, your house must be dry before introducing the flooring. Also, make sure the subfloor and/or battens are flat and level. Installing on an uneven floor is very difficult.

Q What finishes can I specify?

A At Vastern, our solid floors are supplied unfinished and designed to be coated after installation. Osmo oils are a good DIY product. Advanced two-part water-based lacquers are more hard wearing, but if you go down this route an experienced contractor is a must.

Q What upkeep is required?

A Keeping the floor free of grit is the best way to prolong its life and minimise the need for major renovation. If you can, persuade family and guests to leave outdoor shoes at the door. Vacuum the floor once a week and give it a light clean with a wood-friendly surface cleaner, such as Osmo Wash and Care.

GET THE LOOK

PALE WOODS ash, beech, maple

Lighter tones can create a clean, contemporary look – consider broad plank sizes with fewer joins. Bear in mind that light wood floors will show up the dirt more, so might not be suitable for busy areas, such as hallways.

DARK TIMBERS walnut, sapele, mahogany

These solutions provide a rich, elegant feel and will work beautifully in both contemporary and traditional homes. You could get the look by staining a more affordable timber to establish depth of colour – but you'll need to reapply regularly.

HONEY HUES oak, idigbo, iroko

Finally, there are the classic golden, toffee and honey-coloured wood floors, which are perfect for establishing a traditional vibe with lots of warmth and character. Oak is the classic choice, offering excellent strength and durability. Note that, as with most species, there are lighter and darker versions of oak – plus techniques that can be applied to achieve a unique surface finish.

CONTACTS

Chaunceys 01179 713131 www.chauncey.co.uk **Coppice & Crown** 07535 108962 www.coppiceandcrown.co.uk **Flooring Superstore** 0330 818 2500 www.flooringsuperstore.com **Havwoods** 01524 737000 www.havwoods.com **Natural Wood Floor Co** 020 8871 9771 www.naturalwoodfloor.co.uk **Russwood** 01540 673648 www.russwood.co.uk **Vastern Timber** 01793 853281 www.vastern.co.uk **Woodpecker Flooring Co** 029 2088 8223 www.woodpeckerflooring.co.uk

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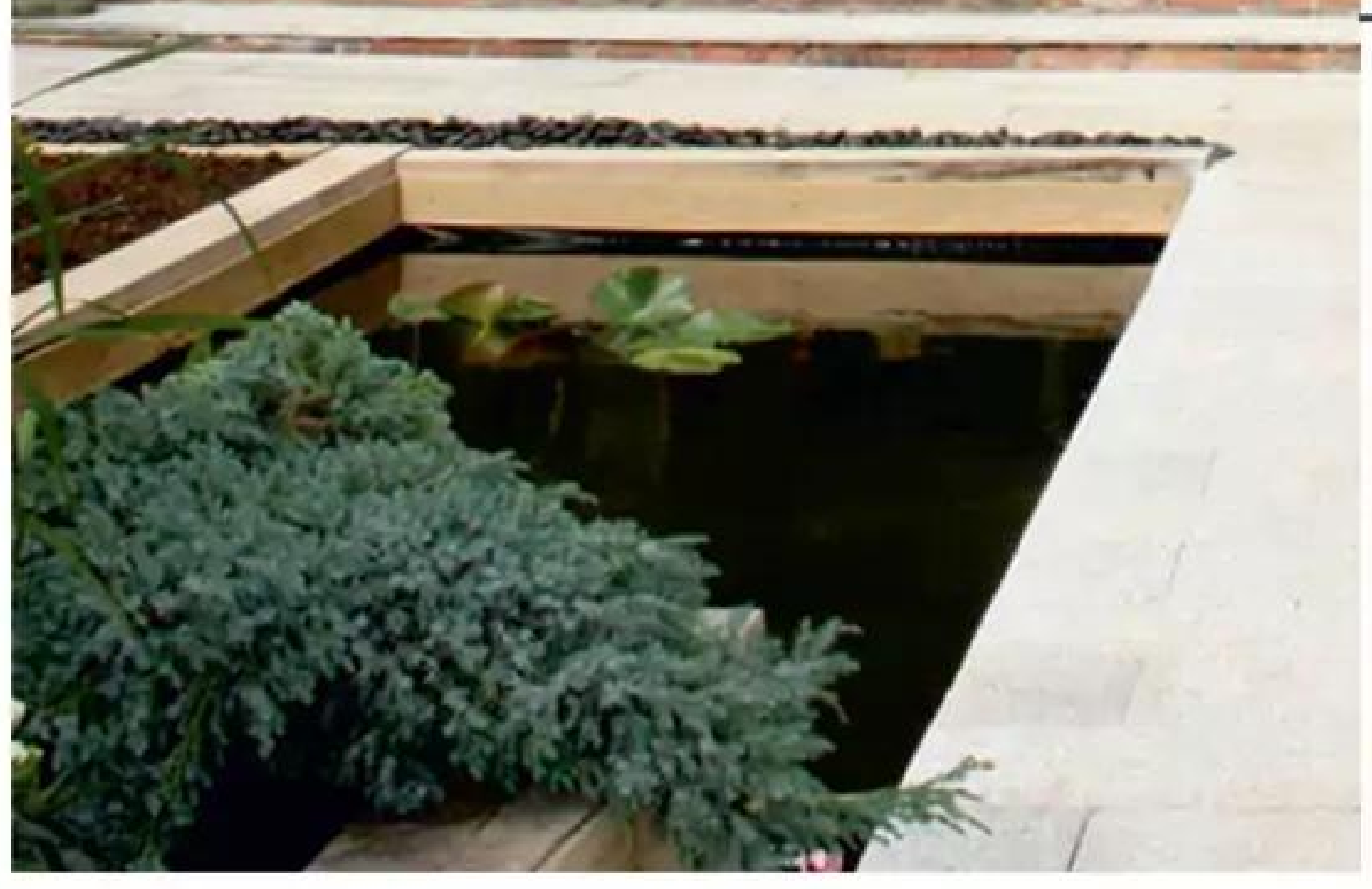

Contact Information

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High-quality alternatives to Siberian larch cladding

*Siberian larch has long been a go-to choice for self builders seeking a stylish, durable facade. But with supply shortages making it harder to source, what are the best solutions on offer? **John Russell** explores some innovative options that deliver the same aesthetic appeal and performance values*

When the Russia-Ukraine conflict escalated in 2022, the UK imposed sanctions and trade restrictions on Russian goods, leading to uncertainty concerning the future of UK cladding marketing. Russwood has been supplying Siberian larch for over 20 years, and it has always been a special product. As a natural material, it was hard to see how it could be replaced.

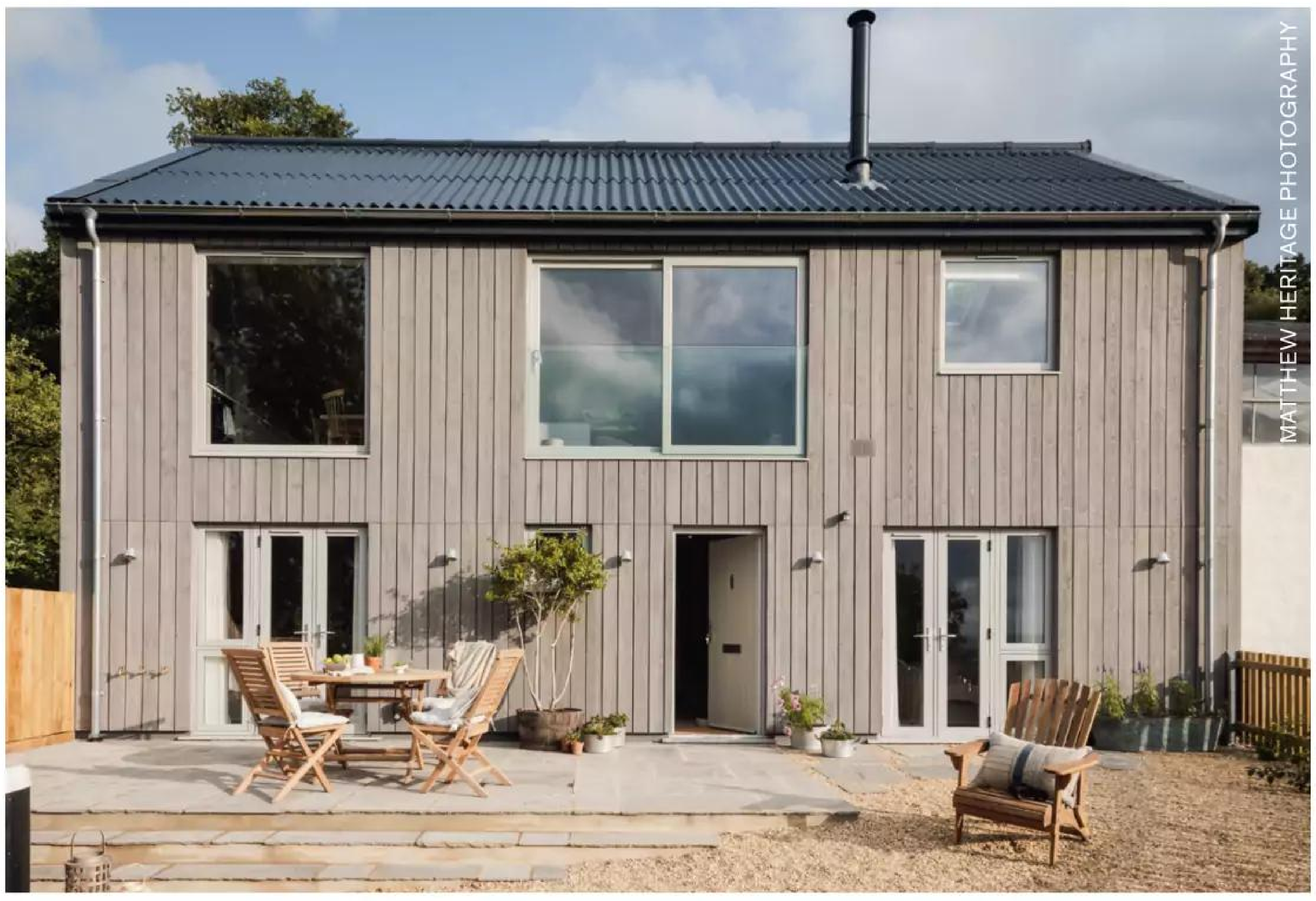
When it comes to timber cladding, Siberian larch had become the default for many in the UK. Self builders and contractors were confident specifying and installing it. People like using the material because it's easy to work with, durable and has great design potential. We've built up extensive experience with it, supported by two decades of rigorous testing to understand its performance in various situations. We recognise Siberian larch's popularity and versatility, and that's why we've dedicated time to researching alternatives in order to meet the needs of self builders and renovators.

Cladding solutions

Architect Select Larch has been specifically developed by Russwood to satisfy the demand for a sustainable alternative to Siberian larch, offering a close match in appearance and quality. Sourced from Europe and the UK, European larch grows faster than Siberian due to milder climates, meaning growth rings are further apart.

The key to achieving a quality product lies in the way the timber is sawn, carefully dried, graded and processed. Boards are quarter sawn, which gives greater stability compared to flat sawn materials. Additionally, this method means that the growth rings run up the length of the board face, offering an attractive vertical or semi-vertical grain appearance. After sawing, the boards are regraded, rejecting any with knots bigger than 45mm diameter, and ensuring the face of each board is sapwood free.

For those seeking a home-grown option, Scottish larch is another sustainable, durable and cost-effective alternative to Siberian. Russwood's Scotlarch is supplied using locally sourced Scottish larch heartwood.



MATTHEW HERITAGE PHOTOGRAPHY

Above: This home features Scotlarch cladding coated in SiOO:X mid grey for a soft finish

Left: Architect Select Larch has been developed as an alternative to Siberian larch

Scotlarch offers a more rustic character, featuring frequent knots that can add visual interest to your building's facade. While traditionally installed in board-on-board arrangements, we've observed a growing preference for open rainscreen installations, mirroring the popularity of Siberian larch. To achieve a more refined aesthetic, we meticulously skim each board to remove any surface imperfections and regrade them in-house, ensuring all boards are sapwood free on exposed faces.

Enhancing look & longevity with coatings

You might choose to leave your larch uncoated. Given ideal conditions, it will eventually turn to an attractive silver-grey colour. If you don't want to wait, or want to avoid differential weathering, then it can be coated with SiOO:X which gives a consistent weathered appearance.

If that's not the look you're after, Woca oil coatings are an excellent alternative. Choose from black for a modern finish, or teak if you want to retain a more natural effect. The oils are translucent, meaning the attractive figuring of the timber will still be visible. Resin exudation is a natural characteristic of all types of larch. For this reason, we don't recommend using dark colours or traditional film-forming paints, as the resin can seep through and end up looking unsightly with time.

JOHN RUSSELL

Founder of Russwood, John Russell began importing Siberian larch for cladding back in 2001. For over two decades, he has extensively worked with this species, understanding its benefits and limitations. John has been at the forefront of testing and developing alternative cladding solutions for Siberian larch. If you are thinking of using larch cladding in your next project, get in touch and Russwood's team of experts will be more than happy to help you specify the correct timber.

CONTACT Tel **01540 673648** Web **www.russwood.co.uk**

TIMBER OUTBUILDINGS

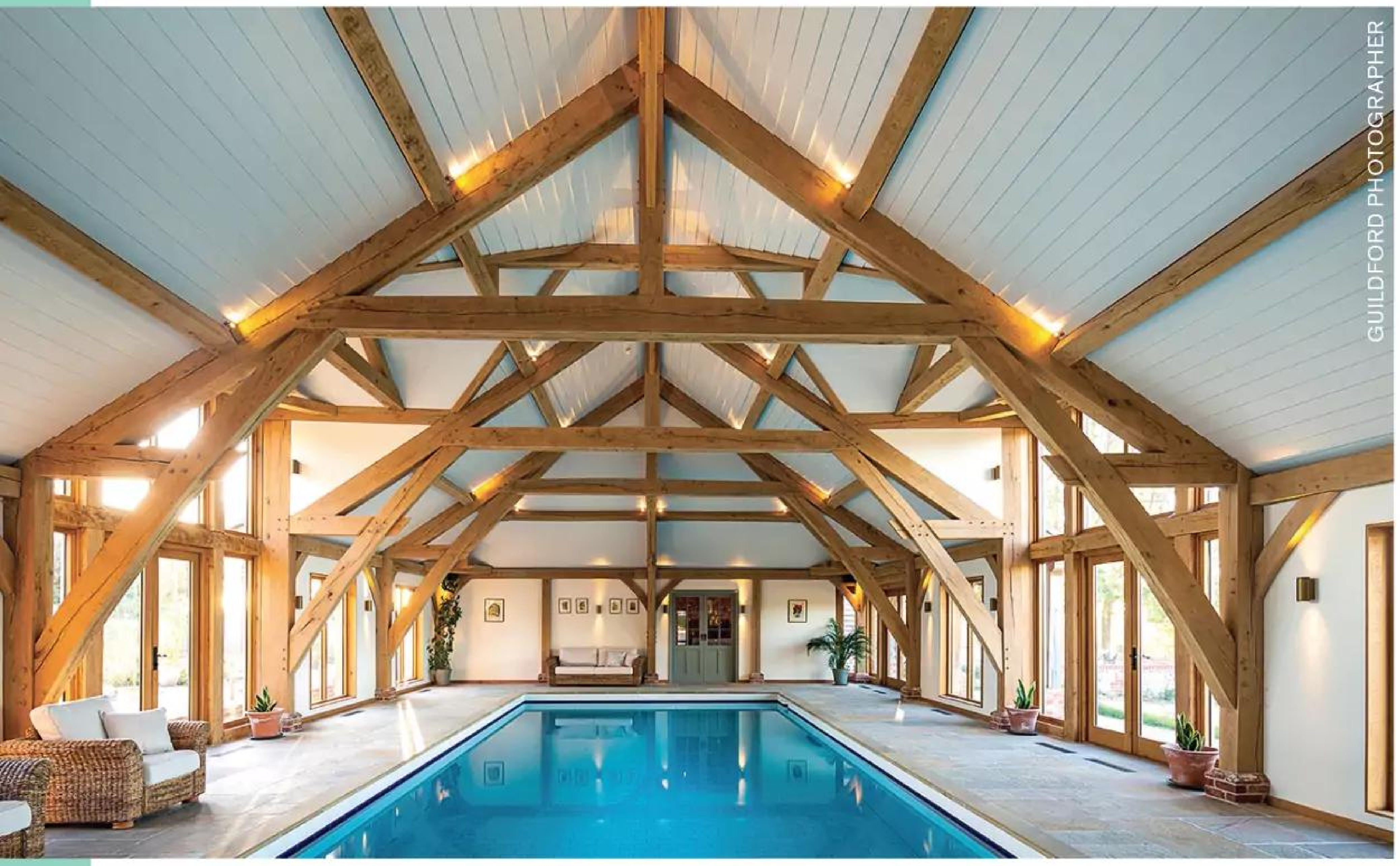
From luxurious pool rooms to wholesome studios, these external structures can provide impressive additional living space to your outdoor landscape

Timber outbuildings offer a simple, versatile and often budget-friendly way to enhance the look of your garden – as well as creating extra room for your individual storage and lifestyle requirements. They can look great finished in natural, quick-to-install claddings, such as cedar or larch – which can be painted to suit your tastes or weather beautifully if left exposed. Some suppliers offer PVC, render or brick slip finishes, too.

The costs for timber outbuildings depend on the scale of the project and whether you decide to go for a design you can install DIY, a modular system, or a bespoke structure. A standard shed could cost as little as £500; a basic insulated office or garden room might start from around £5,000; while a more bespoke, large-scale structure, like a pool room or annexe, can set you back £15,000+.

A more comprehensive service, taking you through the entire process from design to installation, will come at a premium. Factors such as site access, the complexity of the groundworks and your fit-out choices will have a significant impact on prices. The type of timber that you use, the level of insulation and the amount of glazing will impact quotes, too. Be sure to factor planning fees into your budget, as well as labour costs to install the electrics and services that will help create your ideal outbuilding.

▼This barn-style, oak frame pool house sits within the gardens of a West Sussex home. Housing a gym, shower room, open plan living and kitchen area, large bedroom and impressive pool, the outbuilding is certainly a showstopper. The external palette features multi-coloured bricks with flint infill, oak featheredged boarding, and clay tiles. Oak windows and double doors flood the space with natural light to create a tranquil, oasis. **(www.oakwrights.co.uk)**



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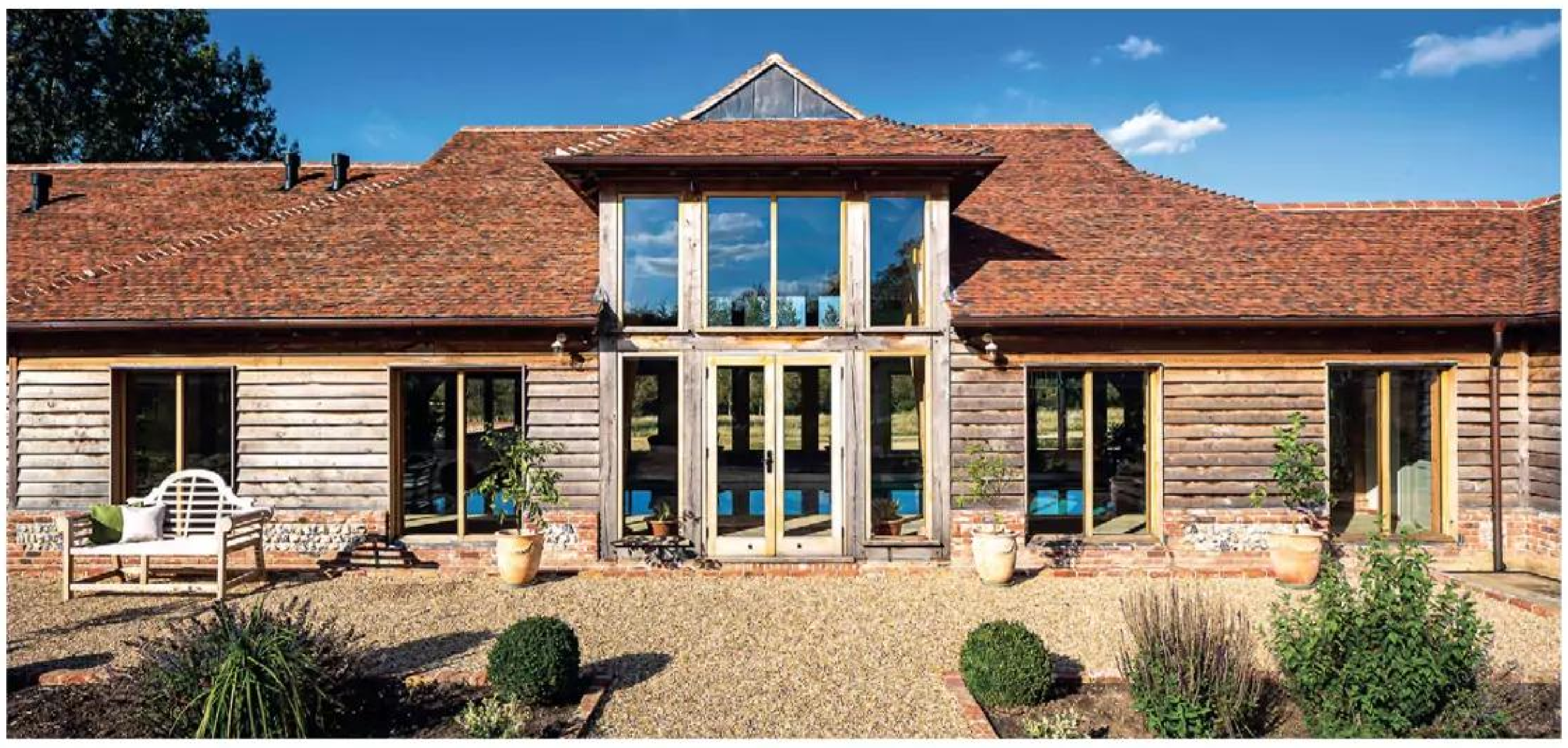
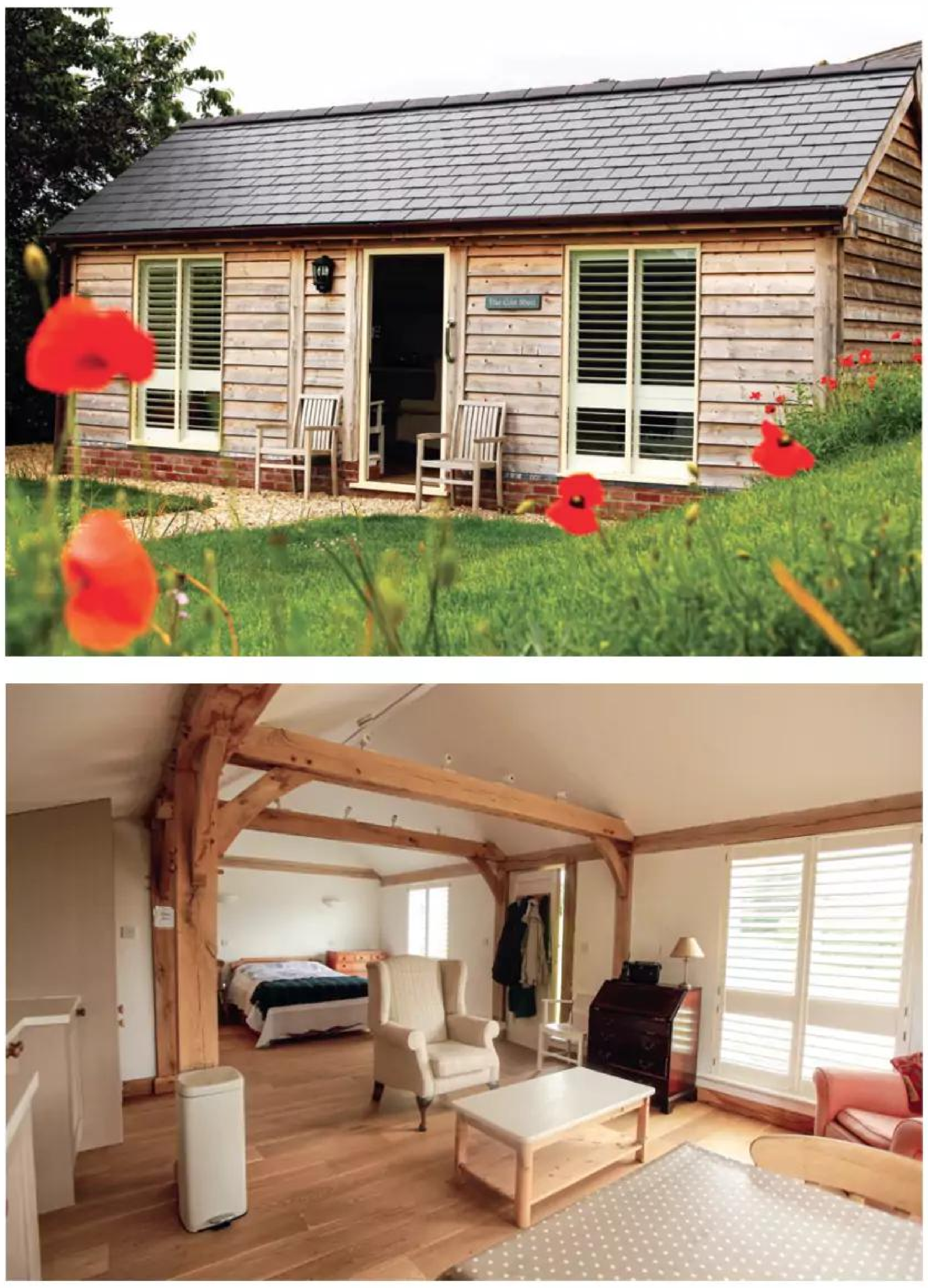
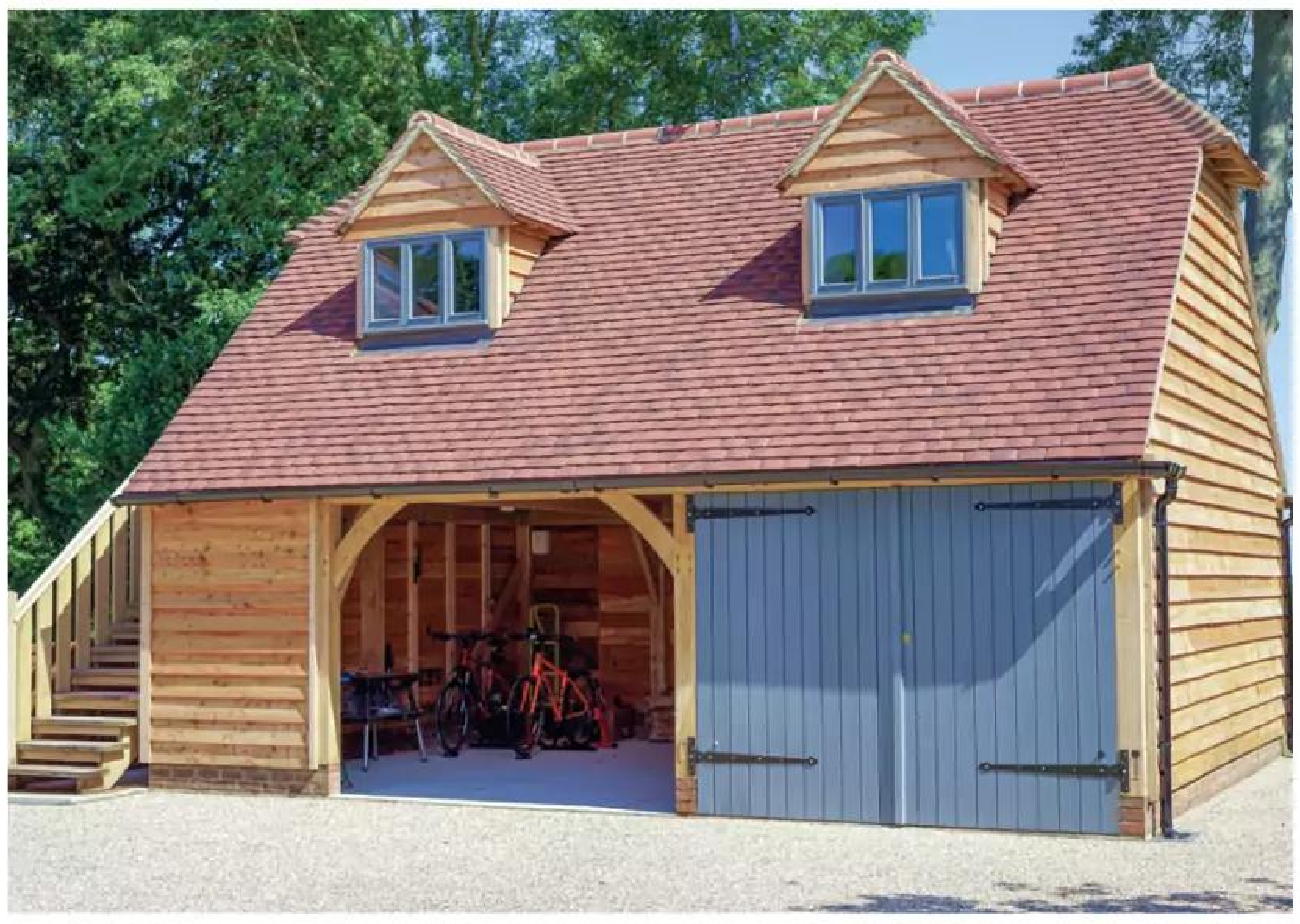




▲Radnor Oak created this delightful annexe in the garden of a property in Somerset. Crafted from oak, the entire frame has been left exposed internally to add rustic charm, while the cladding has been purposely weathered to embed the building into its natural landscape. The catslide area of the roof has been cleverly used to accommodate the shower room and kitchen, while the open-plan bedroom expands the space and allows guests to view the surrounding fields and wildlife. **(www.radnoroak.co.uk)**



▲This full span, room-over oak frame garage includes secure and spacious bays for vehicles and garden equipment, plus an external staircase leading to a living zone above. A rustic barn-hip style roof is finished in characterful handmade clay tiles. Two dormer windows increase usable space and draw sunlight into the rooms, while two Velux windows on the opposite side offer views of the beautiful, surrounding countryside. The open design of the carport maximises the space available, creating vital opportunities for storage. **(www.oak-designs.co.uk)**

EXPERT VIEW

ZOE GREY, *outbuildings and extensions specialist at Oakwrights, helps you decide if a timber outbuilding works for you*

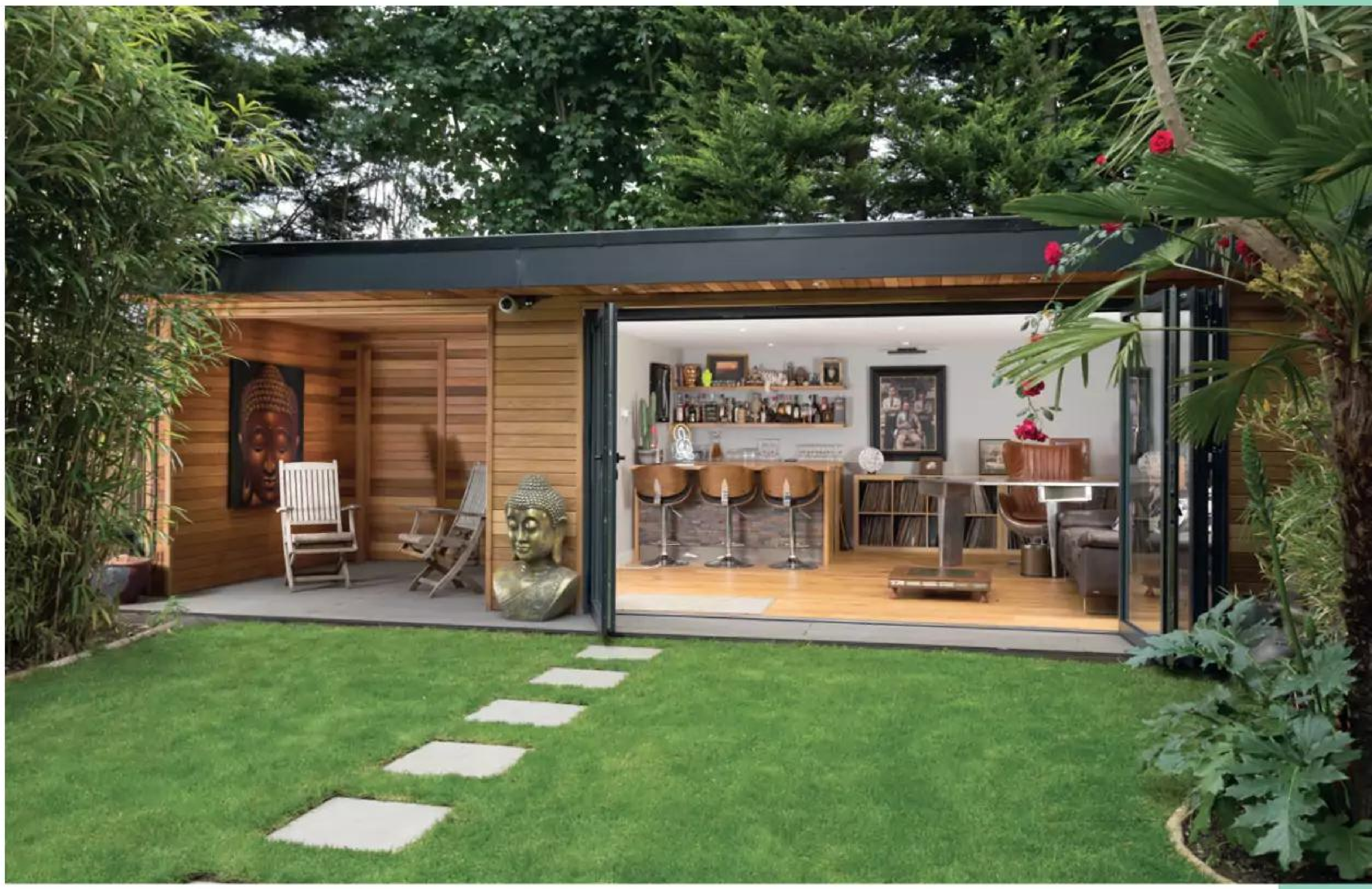
Q Do I need to apply for planning permission for an outbuilding?
Providing your proposed design meets the rules set out in permitted development rights, you can erect a permanent outbuilding without planning permission – although you may want to arrange a certificate of lawfulness to confirm that planning isn't required. Large structures and certain uses will require planning.

Q How easy is the installation?
Most of the manufacturing is done in an external workshop, making installation very straightforward and timely. For example, the total build for a garage would be between 3-6 months. Factors such as the size of your outbuilding and the efficiency of the changeover of trades onsite will affect timeframes.

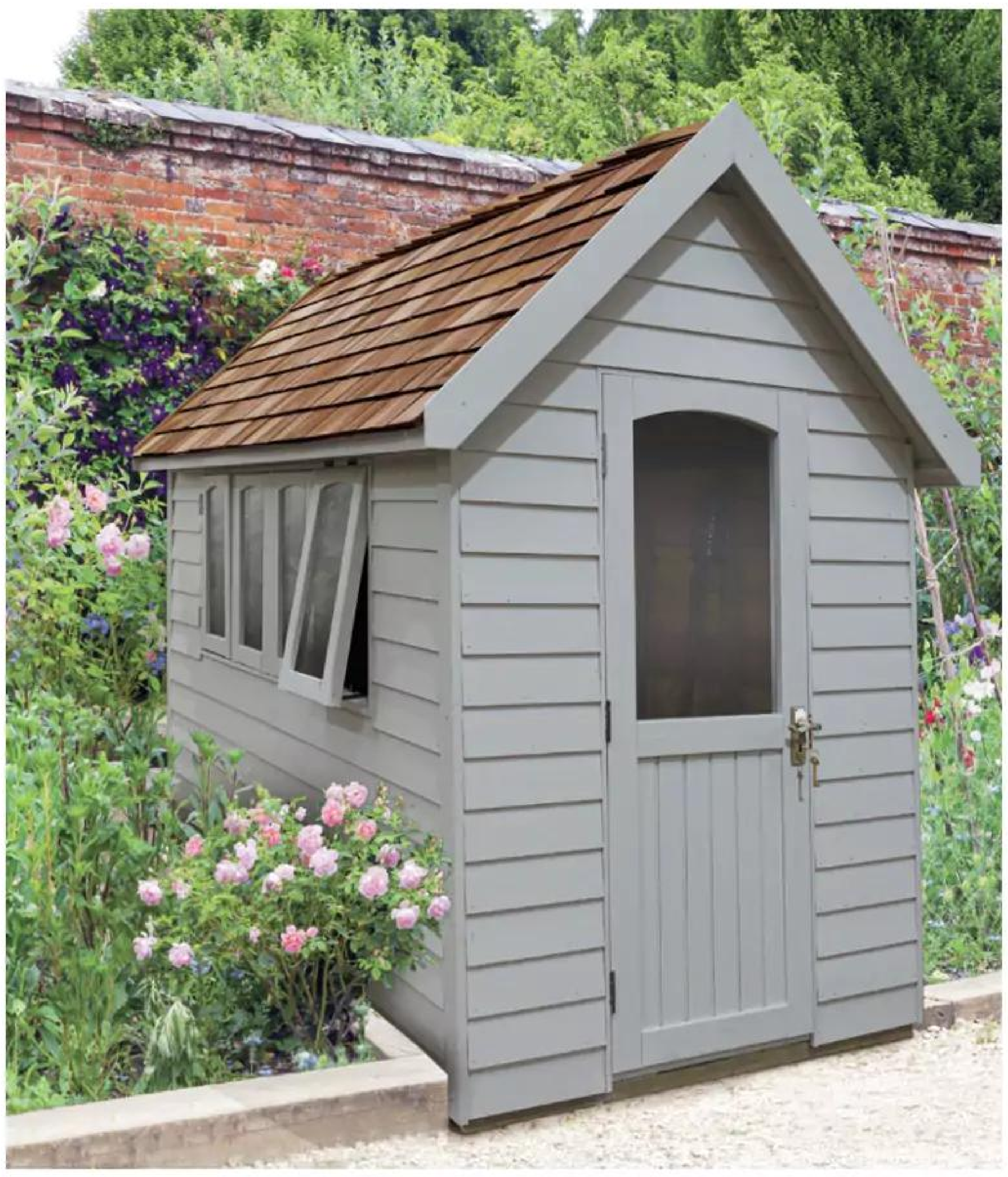
Q What are the fire regulations for a timber outbuilding?
Fire safety for wooden garages, sheds and other small structures is of the utmost importance to ensure you and your guests are safe. The new building should be at least 1m away from any boundary. If this is not possible then external fire protection spray or fire board needs to be installed. Make sure to speak to your contractor or supplier to ensure any necessary fire doors and a means of escape, have been considered in the design. The best way to make sure your structure is safe is to seek specific fire protection advice from a professional.

Q Does a space that is aesthetically separate from the main building work better than one that mirrors the style?
Creating a visually distinctive structure gives the building its own identity and allows for greater experimentation with both architectural form and materials. This approach can also be the most cost-effective, as you can construct a more minimal space with cheaper fixtures.

Complementing your main home with a seamless design will make your new addition appear as if it has always been part of the property. In the future this could potentially enhance the resale value, as the new space will align better with the overall aesthetic of the plot.

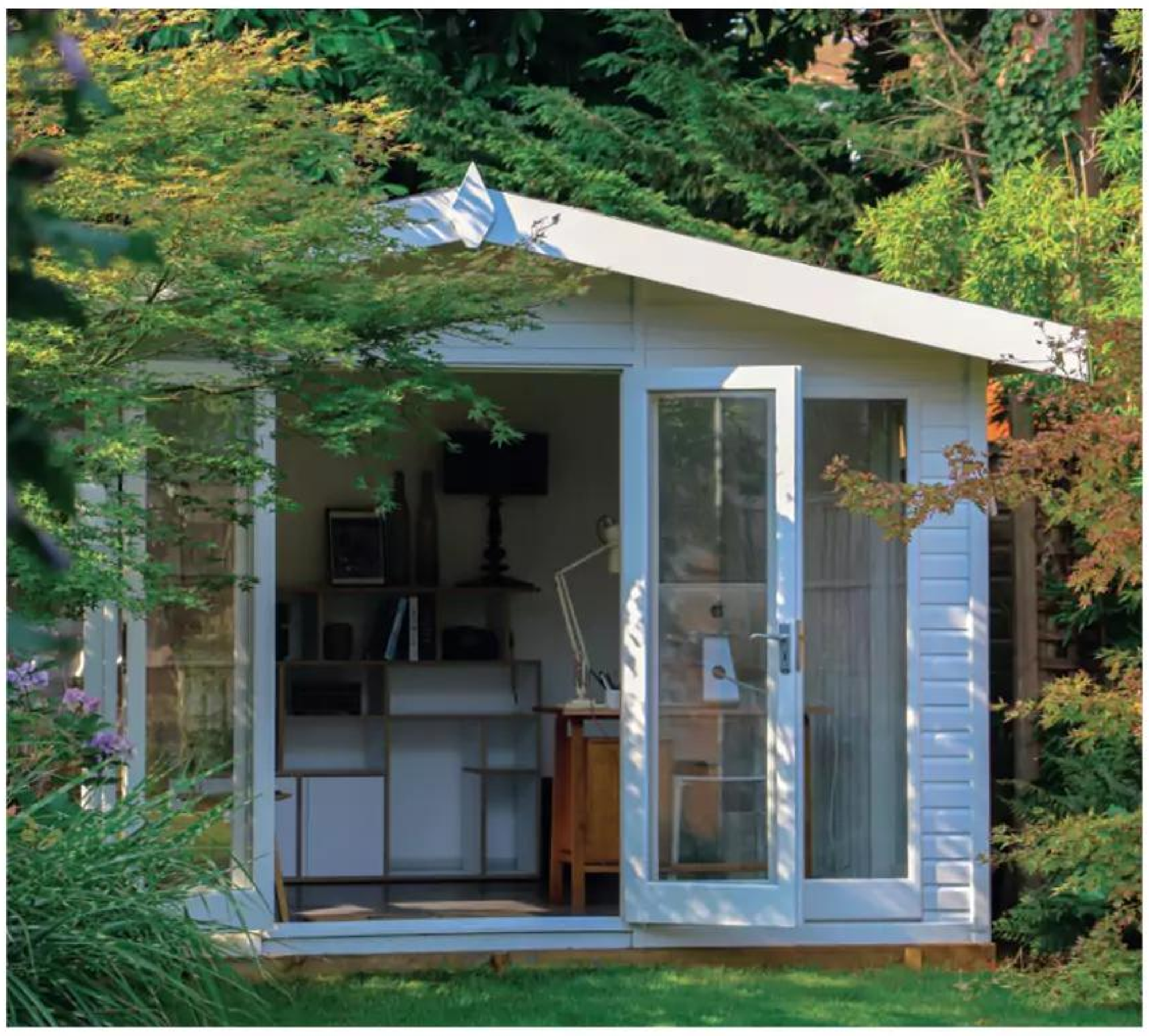


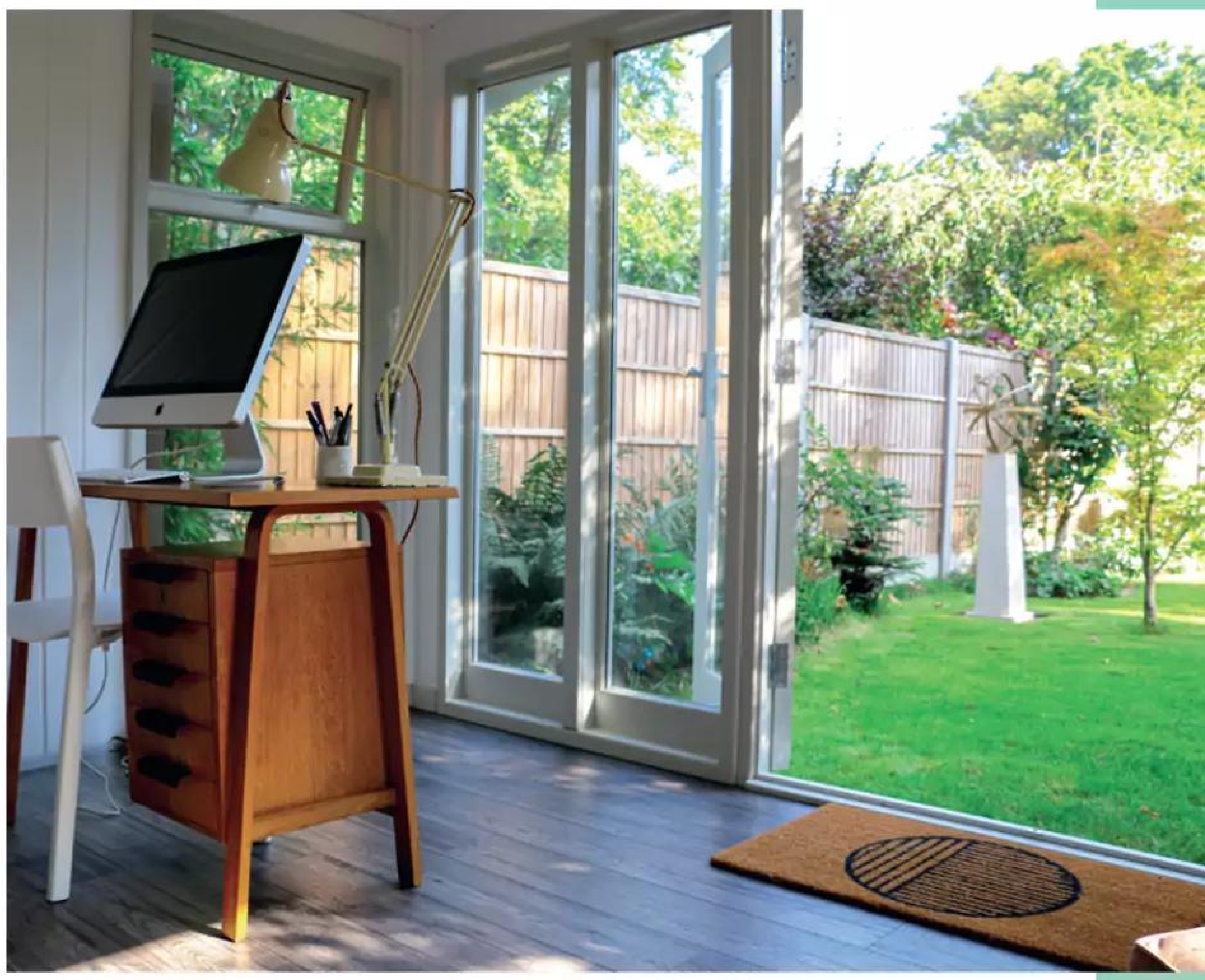
▲ A modern, multi-functional timber outbuilding is sure to stand out in your garden. This sleek design not only houses a home office, but also a bar, making it the perfect dual-use space for work and leisure. The contemporary bifold doors add an eye-catching contrast to the timber cladding, while also filling the interior with natural light and framing the view to the surrounding garden. The inclusion of an inviting, tranquil outdoor lounge ensures the space is enjoyable throughout the seasons. **(www.intothegardenroom.com)**



◀ Handmade to order, this quaint outbuilding is an ideal spot for storing tools, potting seedlings or as a place to do a bit of DIY. Redwood boards are mounted to the framework to give a featheredge look. The steeply pitched roof lends the building a distinct style, alongside providing generous head height, making the structure as practical as it is fashionable. The Redwood Lap Forest Retreat shed is available in a choice colours and assembled for you on-site by in-house builders. Prices start from **£4,199.99**. **(www.forestgarden.co.uk)**

Malvern Garden ▶ Buildings constructed this timeless handcrafted, chalet-style garden room with the purpose of making it as flexible as possible. The space can be used to relax and unwind in or for entertaining and dining. These outbuildings are fully customisable, with a range of sizes, cladding types and window and door configurations to choose from, to suit your lifestyle. Prices for this model start from **£5,015**. **(www.malverngardenbuildings.co.uk)**





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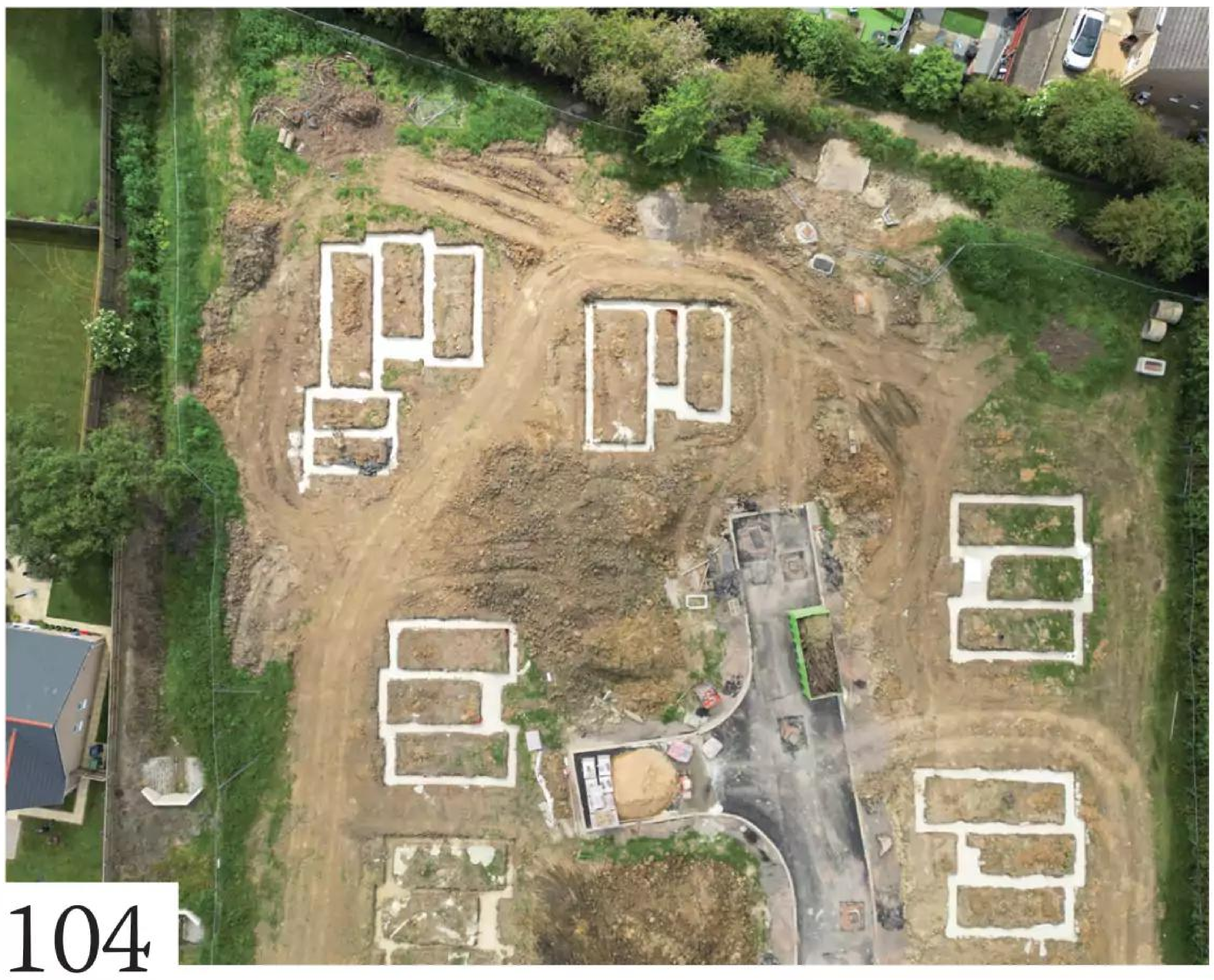

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The owners of this characterful home in Cheshire worked with Welsh Oak Frame (www.welshoakframe.com) to complete their dream build, which sits on land next to the farmhouse they had owned for more than 20 years

NIKHILESH HAVAL

How to turn your garden into a self build plot

Martin Gaine explains how to assess your land's potential, and outlines the different routes you might take for planning success

With house prices continuing to rise and building sites hard to find, many homeowners are discovering a potential goldmine in their own gardens. Converting part of your property into a plot can present a lucrative opportunity, whether you plan to construct a new home for yourself or sell the land to developers.

Of course, you can sell your land without planning permission – but to maximise its value and its appeal to potential buyers, it makes sense to try and obtain consent to build on it. In this article, I explain how to work out whether your garden has development potential, your options when it comes to applying for planning permission and the implications if you plan to self build, as well as how you might sell the plot to a developer.

Assessing your garden's potential

Before diving into a full-scale planning application, you need to evaluate whether your land is suitable for development. There are several key factors that determine a garden's building potential, the most important of which is its size. It's easy to underestimate how large a plot needs to be to accommodate a full-sized house, some spacing around it, front and rear gardens and off-street parking. In addition, you need to be sure there's enough of the original garden leftover to serve your existing dwelling.

The planners are keen for new houses to fit in with the surrounding development. If all the properties along a street are identical in size and design, and are lined up in a regimented fashion along the road, it'll be difficult to build something substantial in your garden because it'll look out of place. In a location where the styles are all different and seem to be scattered around with no clear pattern, it's much easier to build a home without harming the appearance of the area.

ADAM CARTER

Below: The owners of this self build in Gloucestershire developed their new home on land they already owned, working with Austin Design Works (www.austindw.co.uk) on the design and Studio CHY (www.studiochy.co.uk) to complete the project

The other thing you need to consider is whether the new house will cause harm to neighbours' living conditions. If the brand new building is so close to nearby properties – including your existing home – that there's overlooking or overshadowing, your application will be refused.

Most councils have guidelines that will help with your design. They might recommend, for instance, that the windows in the new houses be at least 21m away from those in any neighbouring dwellings, to preserve privacy.

Right: The owners of this property worked with Scandia-Hus (www.scandia-hus.co.uk) to build two houses on their garden plot in Surrey. However, the planning process presented multiple challenges before the scheme was eventually approved at appeal

They might also be prescriptive about how large the gardens must be – both for the new house and your existing home, what level of parking should be provided and what bin and cycle storage is needed. There are national guidelines on the minimum size of new dwellings.

Initial research

If your site seems large enough for a new house without looking out of place or disturbing neighbours, start by researching further. Begin with the local planning history – check your local authority's planning portal for past applications, which can reveal approval trends and common reasons for rejection. Also, have a read of the local development plan – called the Local Plan – to get a sense of the council's policy towards garden homes. Some areas actively will encourage infill or backland development, while others may have harsher restrictions.

Finally, consider hiring a planning consultant or architect for an initial assessment. They can identify potential issues, such as protected trees, flood zones or any green belt restrictions, that you may not have noticed. This upfront investment could save you time and money later on.

Getting planning permission

There are numerous options when it comes to seeking planning permission. The traditional route is to start with a pre-application, whereby you prepare some initial rough sketches of what you're proposing and seek advice from the council. The disadvantage is that councils now charge for pre-application advice, and their response is 'without prejudice'. This means that even if they indicate a planning application would be approved, they can change their minds when you actually submit one.

Pre-apps are an affordable way to identify potential issues before submitting a formal proposal, boosting your chances of success. They also allow you to build rapport with the case officer handling your application, and since they're anonymous, your neighbours won't be alerted.

Rather than applying for full planning permission, you can apply for outline consent, which establishes whether a proposed development would be acceptable in principle. If this is granted, you later apply for reserved matters, through which you provide full details of the final design, as well as landscaping and access. If you plan to sell the plot, this type of consent might be enough to help you find a buyer, who can then design the house to suit their preferences.

Ultimately, a full application is the best way to maximise the value of the site. That's because if it is granted, all key planning issues are resolved, making it more appealing to buyers. The downside is that you need to produce a full set of plans and also invest in any other planning reports that might be required, such as a tree survey, ecology survey, highways report or flood risk assessment.

Finding the right architect

If you do proceed with a full application, the next crucial step is to find a good designer. Choosing the wrong one has two possible outcomes: either the council refuses planning permission and you've wasted time and money or, worse, you're granted consent for something that isn't quite what your family needs (if you're self building) or that doesn't make best use of the site and maximise profit (if you plan to develop it). The best architects for smaller-scale projects are local. They're likely to have a good understanding of the area and of council policy, plus they may have an established relationship with the planners.

All councils maintain a public record of planning applications on their website. To find active architects and agents in your area, check the database for successful similar applications, as these can highlight potential issues you might not have considered, such as the presence of a protected tree. While it's tempting to minimise costs for a speculative garden development, a low-quality application greatly reduces your chances of success. It's crucial to invest to maximise your chances of gaining approval.

Build out or sell on?

If you want to create a house in your garden to move into yourself, you can self build – and this magazine is packed full of expert advice and useful guidance to help you to embark on that fulfilling journey! Thankfully, it is not all red tape, there are some planning advantages for self builders – for example, they're exempt from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and from the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements, which were introduced last year.

If you want to sell, consider listing the plot on specialist website **PlotBrowser.com**, or you could sell at auction or through a local estate agent. It's also possible to sell to a developer or a prospective self builder on a 'subject to planning permission' basis, whereby they take on the hassle and expense of the planning process and buy the land if consent is granted for the project.

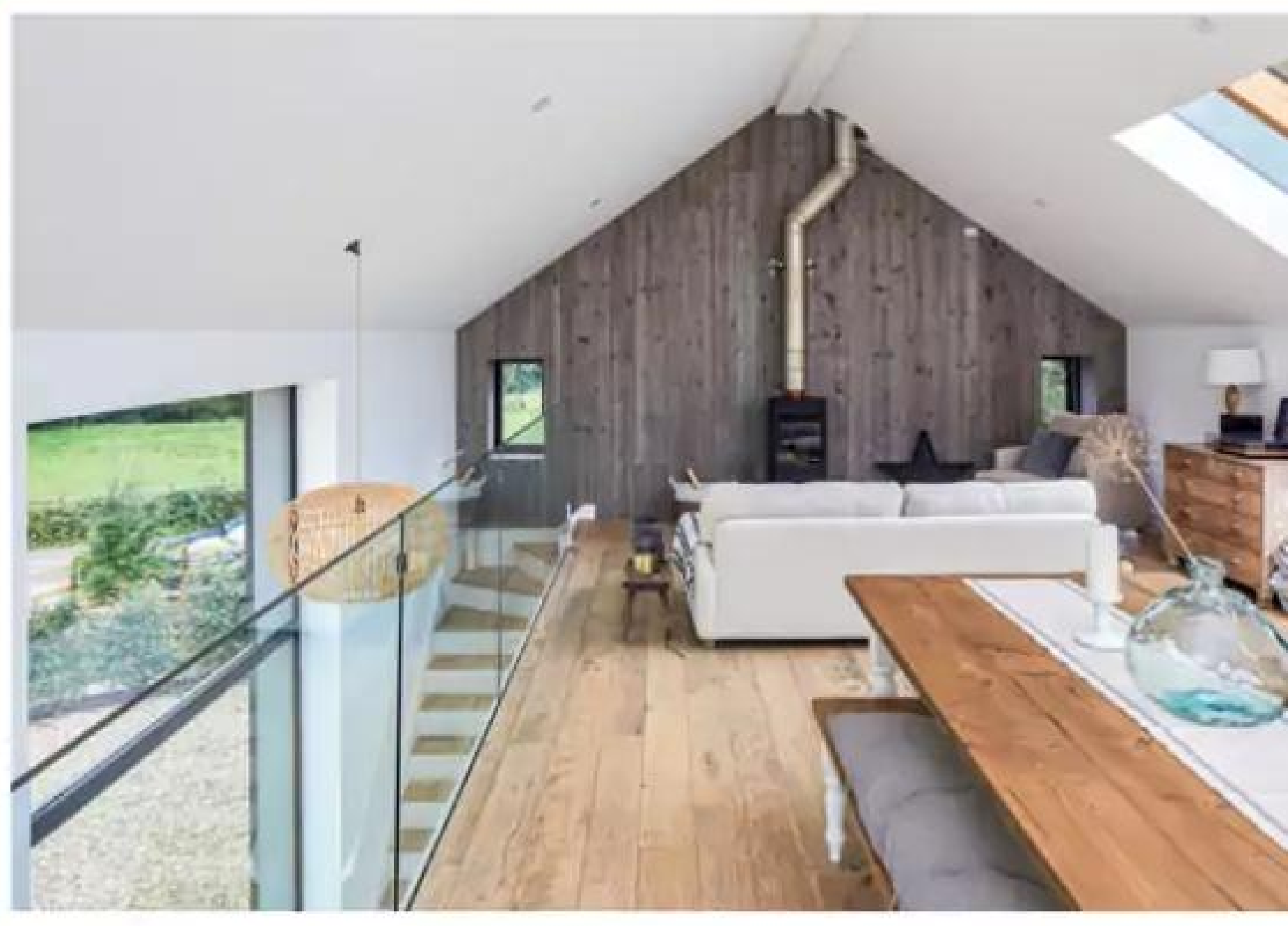
Converting your garden into a plot can be a rewarding project, whether for personal use or profit. Success depends on thorough research, professional guidance, and careful planning. While the process can be difficult, the potential rewards – whether financial or the satisfaction of creating a new home – can make it very worthwhile.

CHRIS SNOOK

SELF BUILD OR A GRANNY ANNEXE?

- If your garden isn't suitable for a full-sized new house, you could consider creating a residential annexe instead.
- This type of amenity is a building in the garden that's equipped with washing and cooking facilities – and therefore resembles a separate house – but is classed as ancillary to the main home.
- As an ancillary structure, it's usually smaller in stature than the main house and does not have its own parking or garden. Plus, it must be occupied by members of the household, such as a teenager or elderly relative.
- You don't usually need planning consent to convert an existing outbuilding into an annexe, but you do need permission to build one from scratch.
- Some councils are hostile to granny annexes because they're suspicious that homeowners intend to rent them out as separate homes, so take care to make sure you run your plans past the planners before you start any work.

Above & below: An unloved garage was transformed into a stunning multi-purpose annexe, complete with a bespoke kitchen from The Main Company (www.maincompany.co.uk)



MARTIN GAINE

Martin Gaine runs planning consultancy Just Planning (www.just-planning.co.uk). A former case officer, he has experience on both sides of the planning divide and now specialises in helping homeowners win consent at appeal. He is the author of How to Get Planning Permission: An Insider's Secrets.

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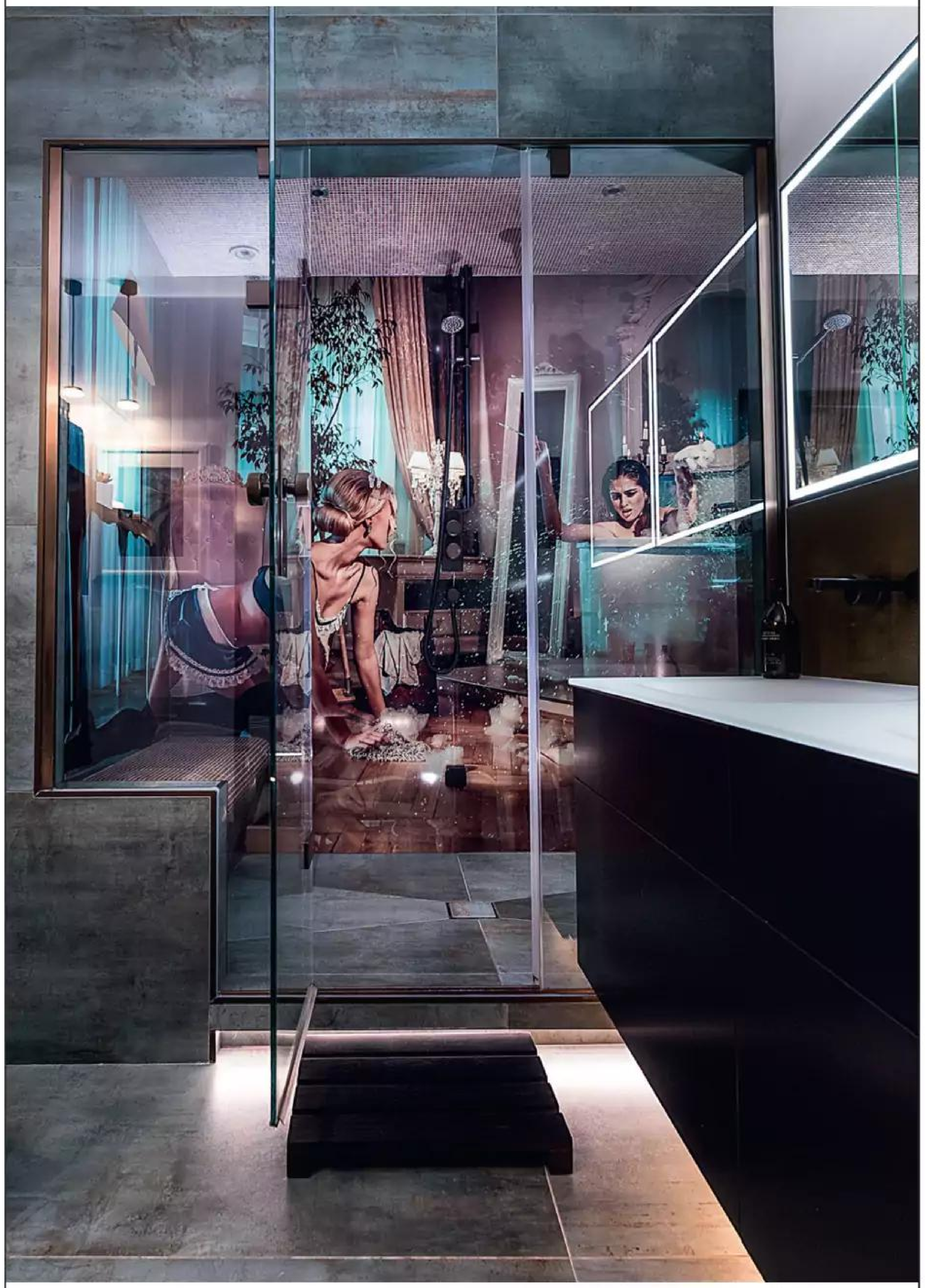

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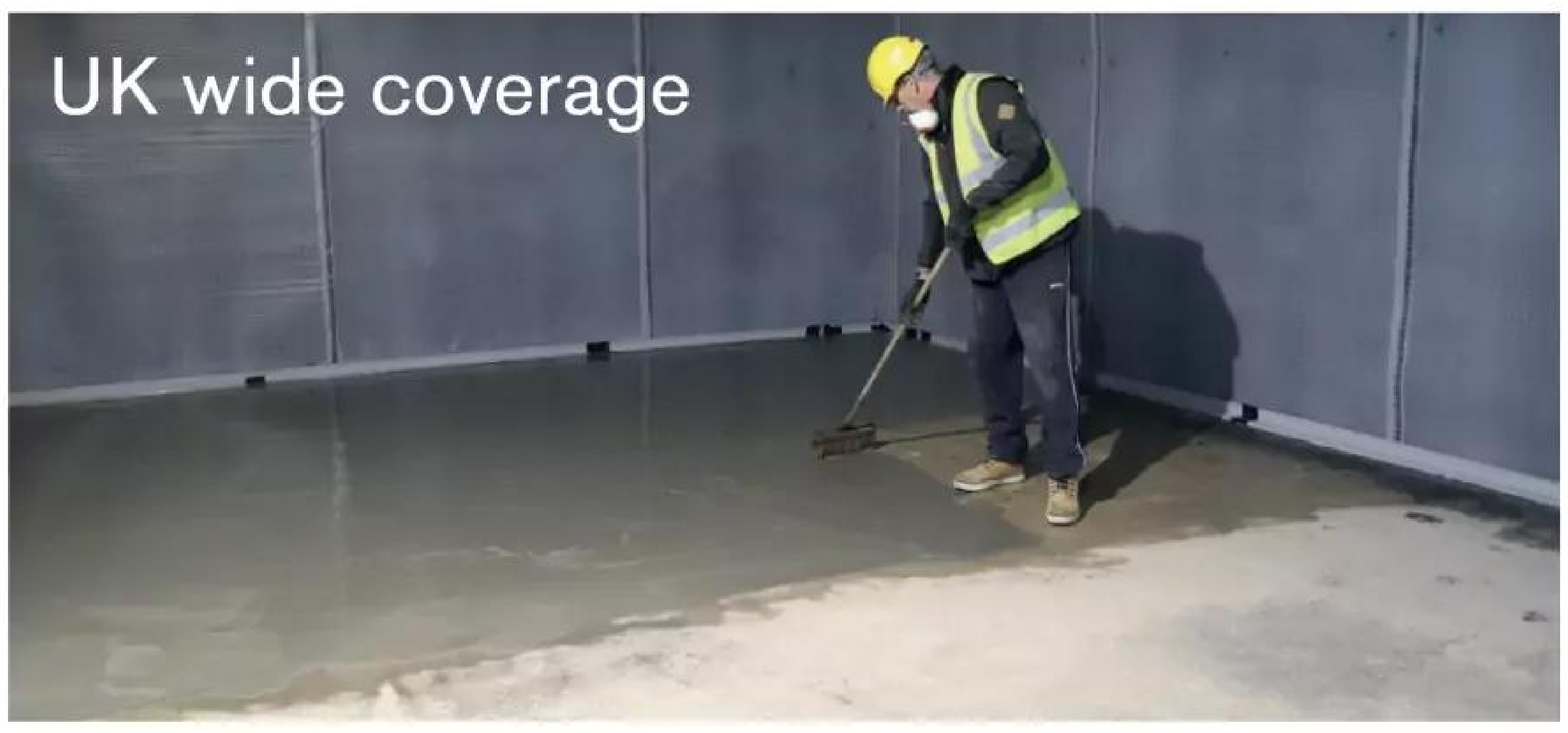

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Rainwater harvesting pros & cons

ISTOCK.COM/WILLOWPIX

Repurposing rainfall is a great way to save money and reduce pressure on the mains supply – but does it make sense for your home? **Nigel Griffiths** sets out what you need to know

Above: Why waste a free resource? Installing a RWH system will capture rainfall and repurpose it for a range of uses throughout your home, such as flushing the toilet

The water that falls on our roofs can be collected, stored and used for a variety of purposes. The main use of harvested rainwater is to flush WCs, but it's also fine for use in washing machines. It's commonly used for outside taps, too, and is ideal for cleaning the car, pressure washing or watering the garden. But is rainwater harvesting (RWH) a good choice?

Benefits of rainwater harvesting

Repurposing rainfall reduces your reliance on the mains supply, easing pressure on the system and lowering water bills if your property is metered. Additionally, rainwater is naturally soft, eliminating the need for water softeners in hard water areas. However, it's important to note that harvested rainwater is not safe for personal hygiene purposes, such as handwashing, showering or bathing.

Rainwater harvesting also has a beneficial, if minor, effect on the drainage system, as it serves to hold water when it rains, rather than conveying it directly to sewers. Spells of heavy rainfall are expected to increase due to climate change, so the widespread adoption of RWH would contribute towards a lower flooding risk.

Collecting & distributing rainwater

Roofs are typically the primary point for harvesting for two key reasons: they already have a collection system in place, such as guttering, and they have fewer contaminants than the ground. While leaves and moss can be removed with basic filtration, more sophisticated and sometimes self-cleaning systems are also available for filtering.

Harvested rainwater must have its own set of distribution pipes. There are legal standards for how rainwater conduits should be marked up, so they're clearly identifiable and there's no danger of harvested water being connected to a potable use, such as a handbasin, at a later date.

Storage of harvested rainwater

Most RWH tanks are installed below ground, which makes it easy to channel water to them. Tanks can be unsightly, too, so they're best hidden – plus digging them into the earth protects them from freezing. This does mean the water has to be pumped from the storage vessel, either straight to the points of use inside the property (a direct pressure system) or to a secondary header tank in the loft.

Rainwater tank sizing follows the law of diminishing returns: the larger the tank, the less frequently mains backup is needed, though the effect decreases with size. A 1,500 to 2,000-litre tank typically covers most WC and washing machine needs in an average home – ($1m^3$ = 1,000L). Suppliers, like Rainwater Harvesting, offer online calculators to estimate the right tank size, but it's best to consult your provider's expert team for optimal results.

How much water can you harvest?

To calculate the volume of water you can collect, you first need to determine the roof area in plan view (top-down), which is usually similar to the ground floor area of your house. You can find this from your house plans or by measuring. This area is the effective collection space, regardless of the roof's pitch. Next, check the expected annual rainfall in your area per square metre, with estimates available on the Met Office website (www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate). For example, a house in the West Midlands averages 669mm (0.669m) of rainfall per year.

Let's assume our West Midlands home is an average-sized, four-bed property of around $140m^2$, with a ground floor area of 7m x10m ($70m^2$). The available rainwater

QUICK GUIDE COMMUNAL RWH SYSTEMS

The efficiency of your system can be slightly increased by pooling rainfall from several properties, such as on a custom build development or in a group self build scenario, rather than using individual systems. This is because patterns of water consumption vary.

A communal setup will be able to support unusually high use from one property, whilst having more storage space if another property – for whatever reason – uses relatively little. Communal systems should therefore require less mains backup than individual installations throughout prolonged periods of low rainfall.

CASE STUDY 1930s Home

As part of a wider eco retrofit of their 1930s property – which included adding internal insulation, a ground source heat pump, solar PV, triple glazing and more – Ian and Wendy Loader invested in a Graf rainwater harvesting system.

The setup included a 4,800L Carat S ECO-Plus tank, with in-house pump and automatic mains supply backup. It took two days to install the tank, and a further two days for the pipework. "The system works perfectly and the Graf tank is a fine example of what can be done in a modest urban environment," says Ian. Preliminary data suggest the two-person household is using only 35L of water per day – substantially below average consumption for similar homes.

would then be 70 x 0.669 = 46.83m^3. Not all of this water will actually be collected, as some is lost to evaporation and overflow. A good rule of thumb would be that you'll end up with 80% of the yield. In this case, 46.83 x 0.80 gives us a result of 37.46m^3. For context, data from water companies suggests the average four-bed household uses around 164m^3 of water per year (including potable applications).

THE CALCULATION FOR AVAILABLE RAINWATER

Area of roof (m^2) x **Average rainfall** (m) = **Available water** (m^3)

For many houses, the roof shape will only allow harvesting on one side of the property, unless costly pipework is added to convey water through, or under, the building. If that's the case for you, then you can halve the expected yield – so, with reference to our example house, it might deliver more like 18.7m^3 of usable rainwater.

Mains backup

Every RWH system needs a mains backup to meet demand when there's no rainwater in the tank. There are several ways to do this. A common arrangement for direct pressure systems, for instance, is to use a float switch inside the storage tank. This senses when the level reaches a critical low point and then opens the mains water feed to refill with a limited amount of mains water.

As the tank only partly refills, there's plenty of room for water to be stored when it starts raining again. So, the system will always favour the collection and use of harvested rain when it is available. Mains backup must be correctly installed in accordance with the water regulations and to prevent back-contamination of the mains supply.

Should you invest in a system?

In principle, rainwater harvesting can make a meaningful contribution to reducing water demand in your home and save you some money on your bills. As ever, however, it's a case of understanding how it will perform for your property, lifestyle and circumstances. The answer depends on a number of factors, including:

- Your demand for non-potable water.
- Where you live.
- Whether you're building new or retrofitting.

To begin with, you need to think about your demand for non-potable water. If you live alone and have a small, or no garden, then a rainwater harvesting system is unlikely to be the right investment for you. Conversely, if you have a large house with multiple occupants, and particularly if you have significant demand for exterior water use, then it starts to become a more attractive idea.

Where you live has a twofold impact on how cost-effective a system will be. Firstly, it determines how much rainfall will be available to be harvested. Secondly, it will dictate how much you pay for your water – there's wide variation in prices across the UK. In the South West, where rainfall is higher, water charges are roughly double those in the South East. This leads to the bizarre conclusion that the payback period for installations in the South West may be far shorter than for those in the South East, where they could theoretically do more good.

If you are building a new house, installing a rainwater harvesting system should be less expensive than retrofitting. This is because excavation equipment will already be on-site to dig the space for the storage tank. There won't be external finishes (landscaping) to remove and reinstate, and open access throughout the house shell will make it easier to install the separate distribution pipework for all WCs and other uses. Retrofitting can often be more challenging, leading to increased costs.

NIGEL GRIFFITHS

Nigel Griffiths specialises in sustainable construction and eco-renovation and is the author of the Haynes Eco House Manual. He advises UK government on retrofit programmes and inspects renewable heat installations on behalf of Ofgem. You can chat to Nigel at the Build It Live shows.

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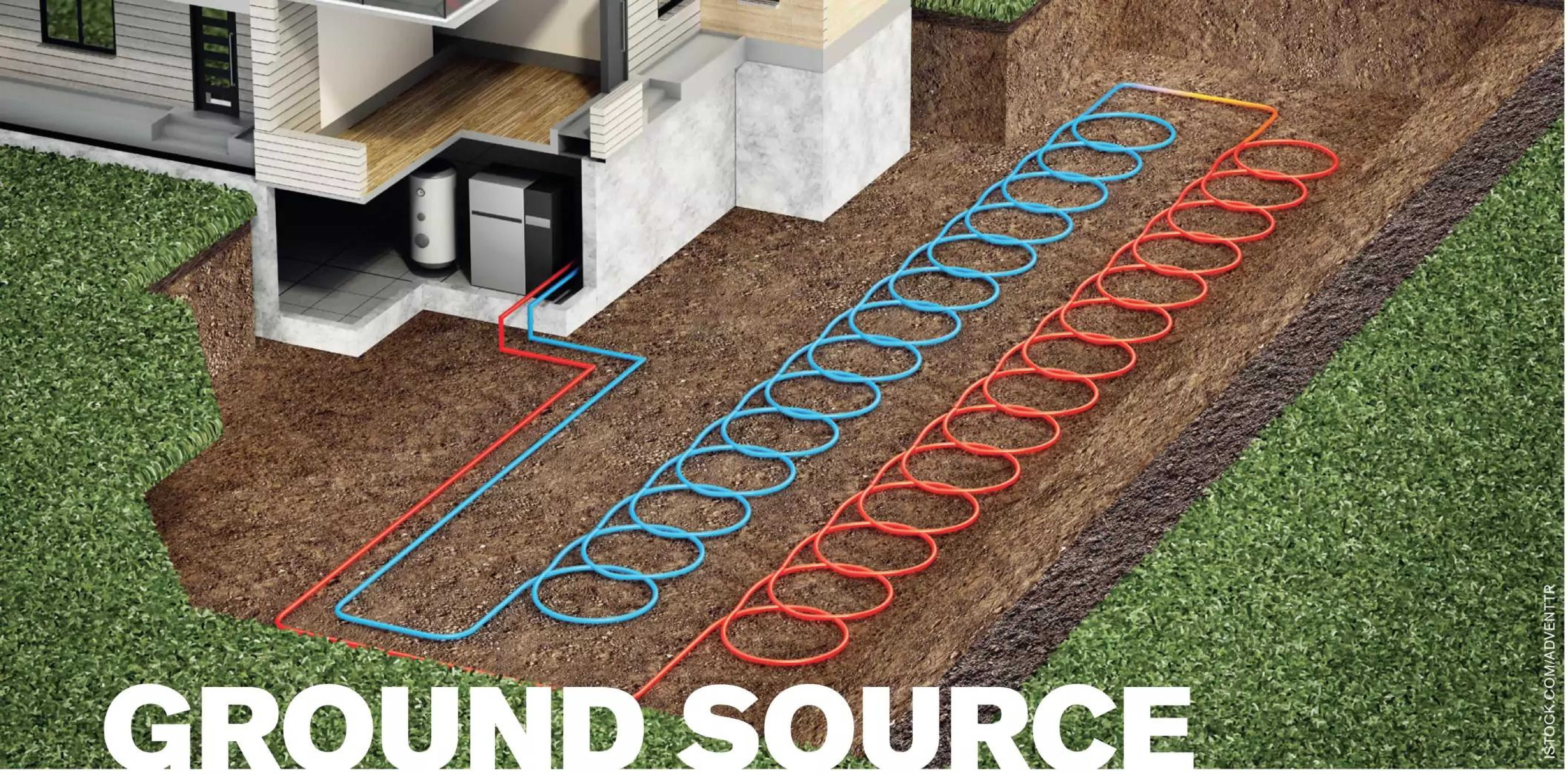
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GROUND SOURCE HEAT PUMP COST GUIDE

This fit-and-forget heat source can deliver savings on bills and carbon – but what should you budget for a quality install?

Ground source heat pumps (GSHPs) are low-carbon systems designed to efficiently deliver all your central heating and hot water needs. Suitable for a wide range of properties, a well-designed GSHP should outperform boilers and air source heat pumps. It's more expensive up front, with prices ranging from about £20,000-£55,000 installed – although grants of £7,500 are currently available to soften this investment via the Boiler Upgrade Scheme.

Understanding costs starts with determining whether a heat pump is suitable for your property, and what size and specification is required to deliver the requisite comfort levels and hot water your household needs. The overall price depends on a range of factors, including:

- **House size** & number of occupants. The bigger the house and the more bedrooms there are, the greater your heat demand is likely to be.
- The building's **energy performance**. The more efficient it is, the lower the heat demand and the smaller the heat pump and collector loop need to be.
- **Emitter type** (radiators, underfloor heating etc) and, in a retrofit scenario, how much of it needs replacing.
- How much **garden space** you have and whether ground conditions suit a horizontal or vertical collector.
- Whether your install is eligible for the government's **Boiler Upgrade Scheme** (BUS) grant.

House size & performance

A typical GSHP install includes the heat pump itself, which should be sized according to the peak heat load of the building, along with a hot water cylinder and a buffer tank. Peak load is based on factors such as the fabric and what insulation is in the walls, heat loss through windows etc. So, upgrading insulation can make sense – albeit this comes with its own costs and considerations. If the load is calculated at, say, 12kW, then your installer might specify a 13kW heat pump. "One factor with the kit price is whether the heat pump needs a single-phase or three-phase electrical supply," says David Billingsley, sales director at UK-based GSHP manufacturer Kensa. "Most of the properties we deal with in the UK are single-phase."

The heat pump will be powered by a collector buried in the earth. This should be specifically designed to provide sufficient energy throughout the year to satisfy your home's annual heat demand (different to the peak load). It can be either a horizontal ground loop (such as coiled slinky pipework) or a vertical borehole. Quality design is crucial here: your supplier should be looking to specify the most cost-effective solution for the ground conditions.

Size matters with any heating system, but particularly with GSHPs, as a bigger output means a larger collector array, with all the associated plant and labour costs. As a rough guide, a 150m^2 house constructed to modern Building Regs might need a 7kW appliance, with a total installed cost (including horizontal collector loop, heat pump, hot water tank and commissioning) of around £20,000-£25,000. A 250m^2 home built to the same standard, meanwhile, might require an 11kW system at more like £25,000-£30,000. Switch to a borehole rather than horizontal loop, and those prices will rise significantly.

Emitters & distribution

Heat pumps work best when delivering consistent warmth at a relatively low temperature. This makes them an ideal partner for well-insulated and airtight homes with low-temperature emitters, such as underfloor heating (UFH), although you can also pair a GSHP with radiators. The key is to ensure the whole system is designed in synergy.

In a retrofit scenario, you may well need to replace some of the radiators and distribution pipework. Clearly, this will have a significant impact on costs; but a good installer will help you identify where savings can be made. "My own home is a good example of something that, on paper, looks marginal for a GSHP," says David Billingsley. "It's an old cob building, which we've put a 70m^2 extension on, taking the total house size to 250m^2. The extension has UFH, but in the rest of the house we stuck with radiators."

David estimates his system would have cost around £28,000 fully installed. "If it was a new build we could have taken a few thousand off that, as we wouldn't have been pulling out and replacing elements, paying to get rid of old kit etc." He keeps the house at around 18°C. "This gives us the comfort level we want. We get plenty of hot water, and performance is consistent – we spend the same on our heating now as we did for oil before we extended!"

Working with a good installer helped to keep a lid on costs. "Of the 15 radiators in the main house, our installer reused seven," he says. "For instance, he took a panel with decent output from our daughter's bedroom and re-fitted it into one of the boys' rooms. He also tried to reuse the original flow-and-return drops wherever possible – so, where there was a K1 (single-panel) radiator, he'd replace it with a K2 (double-panel) radiator in the same width to achieve the output required."

This kind of savvy approach can cut the amount of new copper pipework required in a retrofit, reducing the overall installed cost for your GSHP. However, it won't work in every project. "Some radiators might need to be changed due to age or corrosion," explains eco heating specialist and Build It Live expert, David Hilton. "The infrastructure may also not be ideal – old single-pipe configurations with radiators on a single circuit aren't suitable for heat pumps, for instance." Similarly, small or micro bore pipes (common from the 1970s, and typically 8mm or 10mm in diameter) will increase resistance in the system. "These may need replacing to deliver the required heat, which will add significant disruption and cost," says David Hilton.

Garden size & collector type

A ground source heat pump requires a big area for its heat source. If you have a suitably large garden, the most affordable solution is generally to bury pipes in trenches about 1m-2m deep – what's known as a horizontal loop. "The collector is the battery for your GSHP, so you've got to get it right," says David Billingsley. "People might think they have a big garden, but in terms of heat pumps, it turns out not to be the case. On a typical project, you might need a 40-50m run to get a ground loop in."

A horizontal install should be straightforward to do on a self build, where there's easy access and you'll have a digger on site for groundworks, but is more disruptive with existing homes. "The excavation is labour intensive, and any subsequent making good of the garden will inevitably bring significant additional cost," says David Hilton.

For tighter plots or where the expense of replanting would prove prohibitive, you'll need a vertical borehole setup. This should be designed by a qualified geologist, to ensure the ground conditions can meet your home's heat demand, and involves specialist drilling rigs on site (good access is a must for this). For an average home, the cost of vertical collectors might start from about £8,000 – but that can rise depending on size and ground conditions.

"A 9kW heat pump might typically require a 180m borehole, for instance," says David Billingsley. "We advise customers on what's required and can give an estimate, then we put them in touch with trusted drilling companies for a detailed quote. For my own 13kW heat pump, I have nearly 300m of borehole; although in general 260m would probably be sufficient for this size of GSHP."

Heat pump grants

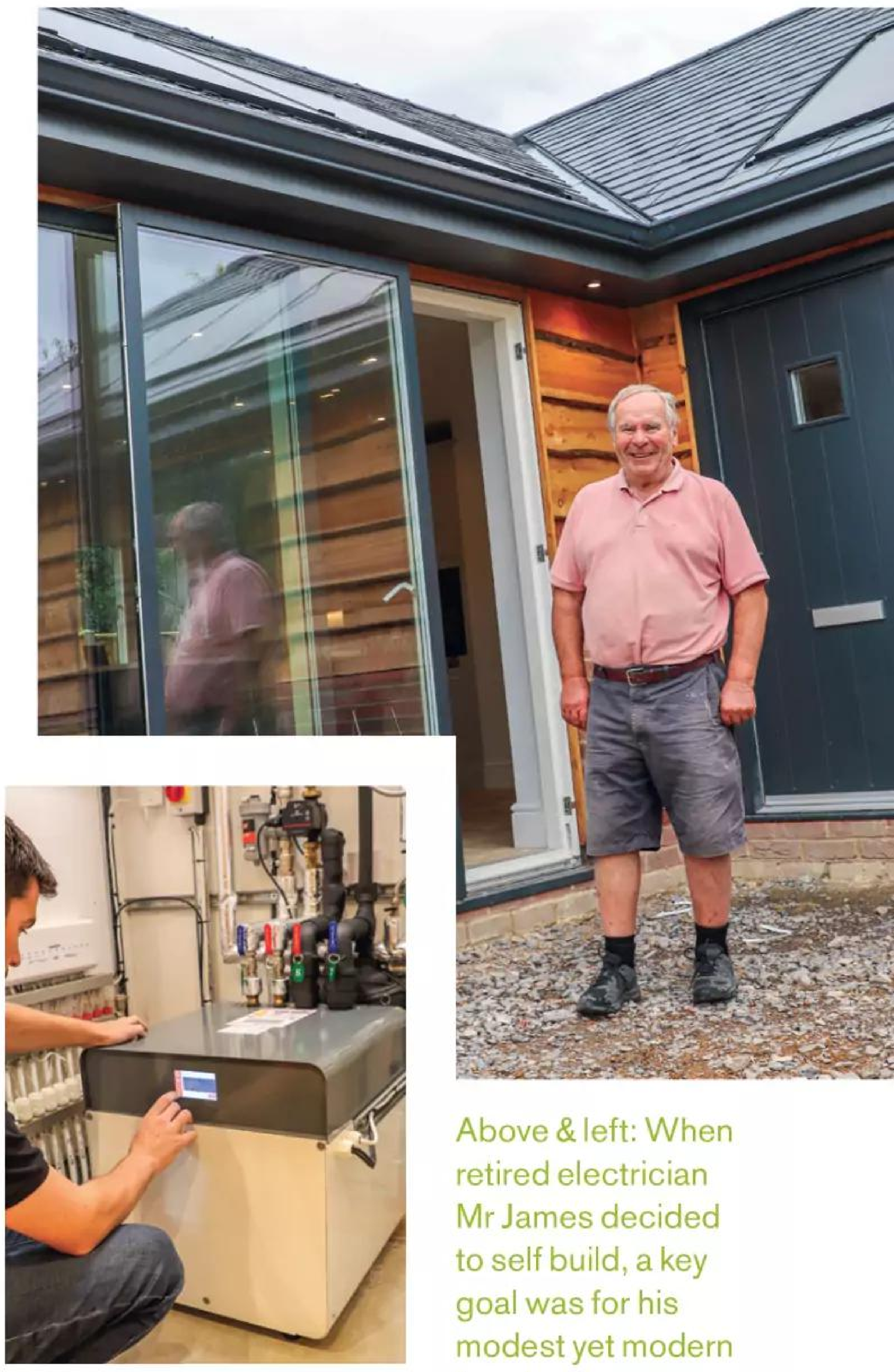
In recent years, renewable technologies have benefited from a raft of financial support. The most generous of these – the Renewable Heat Incentive – closed to new applications in 2022. It's replacement, the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) still offers a meaningful contribution, in the form of a £7,500 grant for qualifying air source and ground source installs. "Incentives like this almost certainly won't be available when heat pump costs drop and gas prices rise, so the BUS grant helps make early adoption appealing," says David Hilton.

Will I save money on running costs?

The big benefit of a GSHP is that it takes energy from a stable source (the ground). Provided the collector is properly designed, running costs will be reliable and predictable. You should see bill savings, but exactly how much depends on the quality of the install and the fuel type you're replacing. If it's a gas or oil boiler, running costs will be just slightly in favour of the GSHP based on current fuel prices (although you'll make a big saving on CO2 emissions). You can expect significant savings versus LPG boilers or old-school electric storage heating.

Don't ignore the additional benefits a GSHP can offer. "The day our oil tank disappeared, we didn't have to worry about the look or smell anymore," says David Billingsley. There's also no waiting around for fuel deliveries, and almost zero ongoing maintenance – plus a ground source heat pump's expected lifespan is twice as long as a boiler.

Ultimately, a GSHP will give you the same comfort and convenience as a boiler, with just a fraction of the carbon emissions. Plus, under the Future Homes Standard, new build houses won't be able to connect to the gas network. As consumers get more used to life without boilers, a quality heat pump install with documented low running costs is likely to prove a real boon if you sell your home.



Above & left: When retired electrician Mr James decided to self build, a key goal was for his modest yet modern two-bedroom bungalow to focus on sustainability. To that end, he chose the small but mighty Kensa Shoebox NX 5kW GSHP. Installed by Onsen Energy, the system runs off two shallow boreholes, as the plot was too small for a horizontal collector. Running costs are currently £800 per year for heating and hot water combined

CONTACTS **Aura Energy** 01865 416837 www.auraenergy.co.uk **Hex Energy** 02476 999382 www.hexenergy.co.uk **Kensa** 01872 862140 www.kensa.co.uk **Nu-Heat** 01404 549770 www.nu-heat.co.uk **Onsen Energy** 01483 492440 www.onsenenergy.com **Stiebel Eltron** 0151 346 2300 www.stiebel-eltron.co.uk **The Ground Source Heat Pump Association** www.gshp.org.uk **Viessman** 01952 675000 www.viessmann.co.uk

SIMPLIFYING PLANNING

WILL THE GOVERNMENT'S CHANGES WORK?

From grey belt land to a tweaked National Planning Policy Framework, our new government has already started to tinker with planning – but will it be enough to unlock more opportunities for high-quality homes? Architect Opinder Liddar shares his take on efforts to cut the red tape

Our current government was elected on a pledge to build 1.5 million homes over the course of this Parliament. They intend to do this by making quick changes to simplify planning rules – but seven months after coming into power, have they managed to make a difference? In this article, I'll share how people – including both architects and clients – are impacted by the current planning environment, what affect proposed changes are likely to have, and whether there's anything additional that can be done to support more quality development.

Why the government wants to act

Has the time finally come when the government is as exasperated by planning as the self build industry and clients? Delays caused by the installation of a large bat tunnel for the HS2 project suggest so. There's a whiff of a fresh planning zeitgeist, which is powered by both the people impacted by the system and the policy makers themselves. We are being promised more effective processes, rooted in sustainable core values.

I expect we'll see more press coverage of the many extraordinary planning issues that cause delay and expense. The Planning and Infrastructure Bill (due in spring 2025) will probably have more to say about this. But a recent review of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) didn't herald dramatic changes. So, I'm not expecting significant impacts.

The current planning system

Most architects want to create better and more sustainable buildings that cater for clients' current needs and those of future generations. As a practice, we've realised hundreds of bespoke homes that reflect these principles. From our work over 20 years, I know that the majority our of clients – self builders or small developers – desire the same result.

Alongside our customers, we create homes that are of a significantly better quality than those found on large estate developments. Surely, local authorities and the planning system should look to facilitate more of this and encourage people to build their own homes to decent standards? Yet when we submit applications, even for one-off houses, I

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get the sense that our core values are not shared. We often get an adverse overreaction from officers, who effectively prevent our modest levels of development.

It feels like we're grouped with mass housing developers, whose projects are rarely architect-designed. This triggers fear from local authorities and NIMBY (not in my backyard) objections, leading to delays. Planning officers, aiming to avoid controversy, often approve only the types of development already accepted elsewhere. With case officers seemingly personally accountable for their decisions, refusing anything different becomes the safest option – ultimately stifling innovation and sustainable design.

Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans have been adopted to control development. In my view, it's correct to do so – but the rules they currently impose often put a stop to smaller scale development with onerous conditions.

For instance, many Neighbourhood Plans set out ambitious environmental requirements. These are treated seriously by self builders and small developers, while the developers of much mass housing seem to manage to avoid the need to comply. Our planning system has to change to support the kind of well-designed, small-scale development that's currently resisted by locals and planners. It's expensive to counter such resistance, rendering smaller schemes financially unviable. As a result, we're not increasing housing numbers as we used to – through gradual, incremental development. Instead, the big housebuilders can use their considerable resources to gain approval for large-scale schemes that go against local policy. They may even be resisted by locals and planners, but because councils are failing to meet their new quotas, developments are put through on appeal. This may result in large areas of housing that appear forced onto settlements, with no real thought given to the design.

It surprises me that, as a nation, we have absorbed any-town architecture, where many people live in bland and inefficient houses whose style is a pastiche of previous historic periods. We don't see this in fashion or technology, for example, so why do we put up with it in the design of buildings in which we're likely to spend most of our lives?

The process needs to change so that better, smaller-scale development and self building is promoted. This will allow settlements to grow more organically, encouraging better communities. Maybe Local Plans should focus on earmarking new pockets of housing, rather than on wider issues, which should be the domain of the NPPF.

What's changed in making a planning application?

When I started out in my career as an architect, planning applications comprised drawings to show the site, layout of existing buildings, and the plans and elevations for the new

WILL THE GREY BELT HELP?

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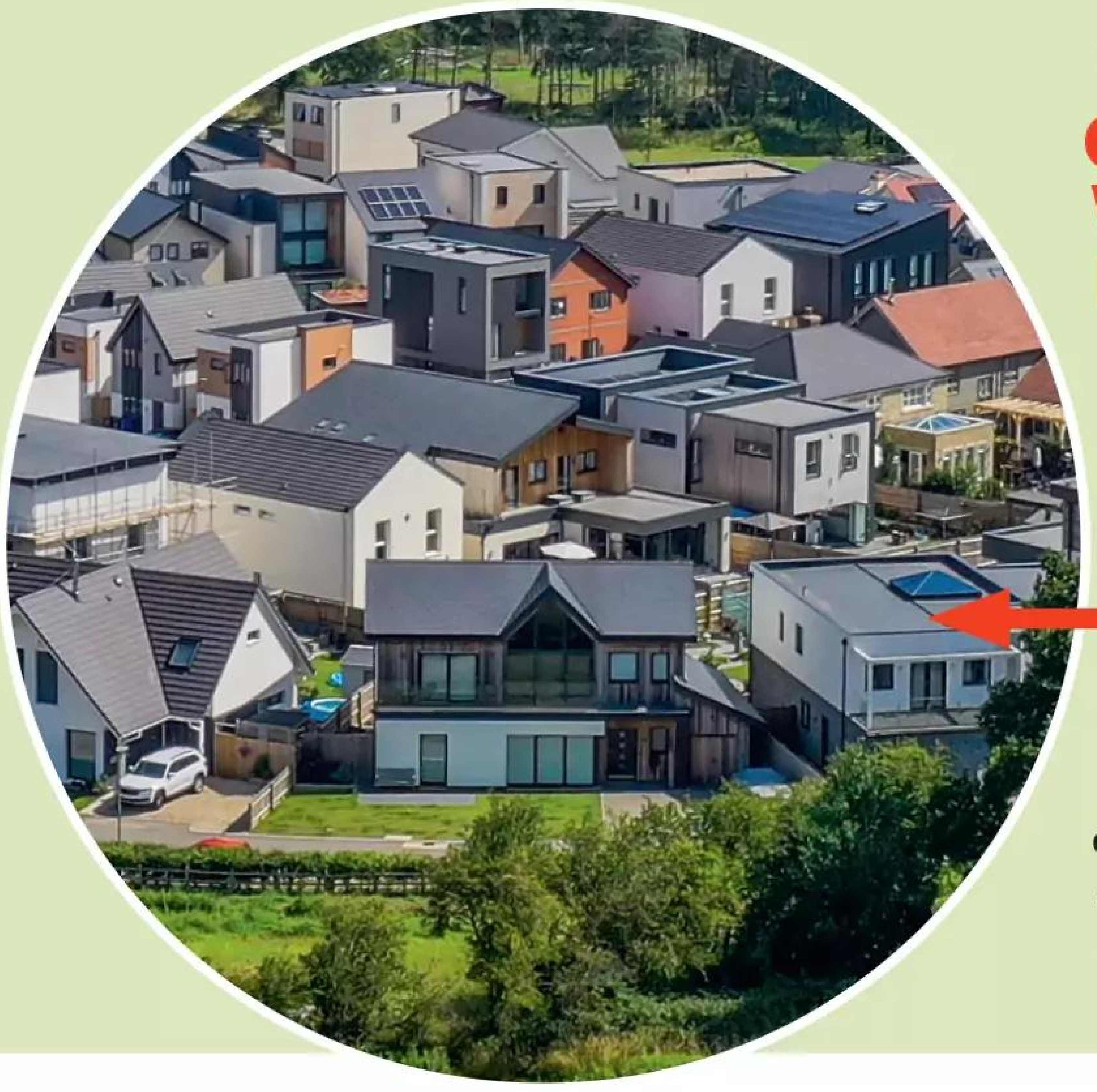
Above: Incremental, edge-of-settlement growth offers a gentle route to increasing UK-wide housing supply – but could a new grey belt designation and related policies favour big developers over self builders?

Redesignating certain areas of land from green belt to grey belt was a key – if divisive – pillar of Labour's election campaign. The aim of the green belt is to prevent urban sprawl, but the government thinks poorer examples can be repurposed for housebuilding. For land to be considered as grey belt, it must have one of these attributes:

1. Land containing substantial built development (that's been previously developed) or which is fully enclosed by built form.
2. Land that makes no or very little contribution to preventing neighbouring towns from sprawling or merging into one another.
3. Land dominated by urban land uses, including physical developments.
4. Land that contributes little to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

All of this points to land at the edges of settlements as suitable for reclassification to grey belt. This will provide opportunities for more housing. However, the government appears to be prioritising policies that mean those plots will be snaffled by big developers ahead of self builders.

Will grey belt be enough to deliver on those ambitious housing targets? I don't think so. Suppose you could develop any piece of land; would this really deliver the amount of housing the UK requires? I'd argue not, as the process of gaining planning permission has become complicated, expensive and time-consuming.



WHAT TYPE OF HOUSING WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF IN THE UK?

IDENTIKIT ESTATES
or
INDIVIDUALLY-COMMISSIONED HOMES
built to better standards of design, sustainability and placemaking, such as those at Graven Hill (gravenhill.co.uk)

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proposal. These would be accompanied by a planning application form, including a brief statement about the nature of the scheme – such as 'a replacement dwelling.'

An application would be submitted and a consultation for comments (generally from immediate neighbours) carried out. I could then converse with the planning officer to negotiate towards a positive decision or to make changes to the scheme. Time went by, and Design & Access Statements were required to demonstrate that we had considered the scheme in relation to its context and minimised impact on neighbouring land/buildings. During the planning application process, we could still speak to the planning officer. Today, with many local authorities it's not possible to speak with the case officer during consideration of the planning application. Most councils want you to submit a pre-application if you wish to have a preliminary discussion about your proposal. However, pre-planning responses are caveated with "this is the opinion of the officer and does not bind the council to any advice given." So, it may not be worth the paper it's written on.

The scourge of special reports

Within a relatively short timeframe, the number of specialist reports and surveys that are required in order to make a planning application has increased exponentially. This is an expensive and time-consuming process, with no guarantee of getting a positive outcome for your investment. Whether you have the results of a pre-application or not, you often have to provide the following information:

● **Topographic surveys** ● **Ecological surveys** ● **Drainage surveys** ● **Hydrology assessment** ● **Arboricultural assessment** ● **Construction method plan** ● **Structural survey** ● **Contamination survey** ● **Landscape design** ● **Landscape visual impact assessment** ● **Light pollution assessment** ● **Heritage assessments** (listed buildings/conservation areas ● **Highways report** ● **Biodiversity net gain matrix** ● **Energy statements** ● **Carbon assessments** (in areas where a local authority has declared a climate emergency) ● **Building Regulations assessments** ● **Post-occupancy review** ● **Tranquility assessments** (which relate to wellbeing)

The list goes on and new requirements appear every year. You may have heard the story of the frog in the kettle who does not notice as the water around it approaches boiling point. Well, we have managed to create a planning system that nobody would have intentionally designed in one sitting; one which stifles creativity and development and results in less housing being built.

Requirements originate from local planning authorities or individual local plans and so are not applied equally across the country. This is unfair and perhaps explains how the system has grown unchecked. Most of this information should not be needed at a planning application stage and should be made a condition of a successful application, if relevant. Alternatively, the rules should be rewritten so that a base standard is expected of all development, rather than applying different requirements in different areas.

Most self builders are faced with a planning system that expects them to spend £10,000s of their own taxed money

INCREASING SCALE & DENSITY

Left: The Build It Education House, which was designed by Lapd Architects, features a full-height basement containing a plant/utility room, home cinema and space for further accommodation

As an island, the UK's land mass is limited. If people want to maintain the general openness of the countryside, then areas for development are even more restricted. Usually when you have a scarce resource you try and make best use of it. So why, with our demands on the need for housing, are we still restrained by height limitations on new development?

Building taller will mean that we can provide larger houses on smaller plots. We should not have to be limited to two-storey or bungalow developments. Make more use of loft-style roof trusses to allow for a room-in-the-roof at a later stage in the life cycle of a building, for instance. We should also look at more basement structures where cars, cycles and bin stores could be sited, freeing up space at ground level. Regulations and liability currently limit the number of basements built in the UK.

to try and find out if their local authority will let them develop their land – with no guarantees of approval before the result is known. If rejected, then a significant part of that investment in consultants' fees etc is lost.

It's reached a point where many prospective clients are just not prepared to gamble such significant amounts of money, so projects simply do not happen. You might think that someone else would make an application in their place and build successfully, but I'm starting to see that this is not the case. I suspect that this is part of the reason why the government ends up missing its housing targets.

I would love to devote more of my time to doing what I do best, namely designing buildings. But architects are now expected to have expertise across all of these subject areas and manage all the relevant consultants. In turn, planning officers are expected to have the same level of expertise. They often do not, so councils employ or hire more specialists to review reports.

Meanwhile, your scheme could be refused because of something as simple as your bat survey being out of date. I would gladly include an appropriate number of bat boxes in each and every project I design, without any requirement to complete a survey beforehand. I know, from experience, that most projects impact bat habitats one way or another. This is an example of a streamlined process that the system desperately needs.

Where do we go from here?

There are many reasons why housebuilding levels have reduced in recent years. One of these is the unchecked growth in regulation applied to the planning system. There have also been 16 housing ministers since 2010, so nobody has stayed at the helm long enough to effectively review the course and steer the planning ship.

Successive governments have adopted piecemeal, knee-jerk policy development in response to the general public's adverse reaction to large housing schemes and climate change. The sudden arrival of hundreds of poorly designed properties has a major impact upon small settlements, not least as the infrastructure that should also be provided is generally missing.

As a direct result, roads become even more congested, the waiting time to see your doctor goes up, there is not enough space at your local school, drainage systems get blocked or local roads have to be dug up to lay new utility pipes and so on. Small wonder locals get upset and drive councils to increase the rules upon development.

Unfortunately every developer, no matter what their size, is required to comply. Whether you are building one house or 1,000, you will need to provide all the information and reports to justify your scheme. In effect, you are assessed as a major house builder. But there's an argument that says your outlay should be relative to the volume of development you intend to carry out.

The time has come to carry out a complete redesign of the planning system. Policy needs to be rewritten so the majority of it is generated at national level. The NPPF should set out the rules that everyone follows, including sustainability targets. They should also be written in Plain English, so they're clear for everyone to understand (not interpret). Local plans should only deal with the location of new housing and the associated requirements for relevant/necessary infrastructure, which largely gets omitted from most large-scale housing developments. I don't think Neighbourhood Plans have had the impact that those involved thought they would. Instead, they have made the process more complex for everyone.

The amount of information to be submitted at the outset of a planning application should be greatly reduced. Perhaps a two-tier approach could be used, with approval in principle as step one to give reassurance to smaller developers, so they can continue with the next phase of their application. This may encourage more small-scale development. In addition, a number of the reports presently required should be removed. Instead, those which are relevant to the site should become conditions of development, so that their associated expenditure is not such a gamble for the house builder.

The planning process strives to protect both landscapes and people, and I would encourage the legislators to structure it so that those with the right qualifications, skills and knowledge are the ones who submit applications. This may be a contentious viewpoint, but as members of a regulated profession trained in most of these areas, architects are equipped with appropriate skills to remove a lot of the risks that the current elaborate planning system endeavours to reduce. Experts are still needed for certain specialised areas, but an examination of the desired impacts and a streamlining of the processes needed to achieve these is long overdue.

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Above: Homes designed and developed collaboratively, for the long-term benefit of occupants and communities, should be supported by government policy

Local authorities should be focusing on facilitating development rather than finding reasons to block good projects. The planning process should be restructured so that qualified planners collaborate with clients and designers to promote better, more sustainable buildings. Emphasis should be placed on beautiful, energy-efficient dwellings that prioritise aspects such as high thermal performance, airtightness and the use of renewable technologies for heating, ventilation and power generation. Planning approval should only be granted to schemes that comprehensively address all relevant design, infrastructure and environmental considerations.

OPINDER LIDDAR

Opinder Liddar is a Build It Award-winning designer and a director at Lapd Architects. He specialises in self build homes and renovation projects, and is a regular expert at Build It Live. For more information about Lapd Architects call 01865 407722 or visit www.lapdarchitects.co.uk

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Buckinghamshire BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.49%	DPP & Building Regs
Loughborough BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.25%	DPP & Building Regs
Darlington BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.39%	DPP & Building Regs
Furness BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.99%	DPP & Building Regs
Furness BS (Green Build)	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.24%	DPP & Building Regs
Hinckley & Rugby BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	90%	80%	6.39%	DPP & Building Regs
Mansfield BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.30%	DPP & Building Regs
Newcastle BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	90%	90%	6.80%	DPP & Building Regs
Tipton & Coseley	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	75%	6.14%	DPP & Building Regs
Vernon BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.90%	DPP & Building Regs
Bath BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	95%	85%	6.24%	Foundations
Buckinghamshire BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.35%	Foundations
Chorley BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	50%	60%	5.95%	Foundations
Loughborough BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.15%	Foundations
Darlington BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.19%	Foundations
Furness BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.73%	Foundations
Furness BS (Green Build)	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.73%	Foundations
Hinckley & Rugby BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	90%	80%	6.29%	Foundations
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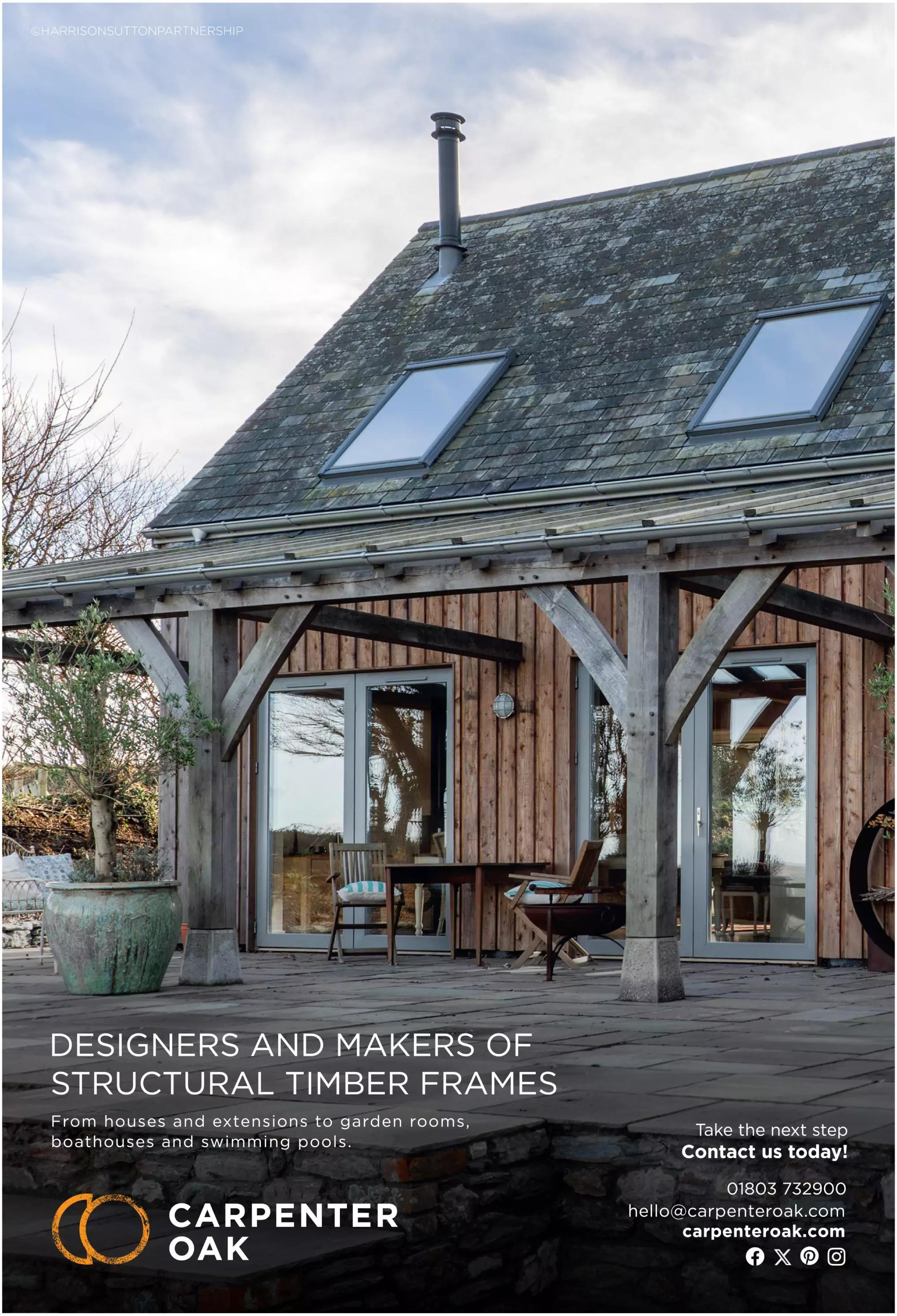
Saffron BS		SB & CB	Arrears	0333 015 2970	80%	80%	6.24%	Flexible
Suffolk BS		SB	Arrears	0330 123 0723	80%	80%	5.95%	Foundations



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Rachel Pyne is director of financial services at BuildStore (www.buildstore.co.uk). She has worked in self build finance for over 10 years and deals with a diverse portfolio of lenders across the whole market as well as on exclusive self build and renovation mortgage products.

SUSTAINABILITY
Nigel Griffiths specialises in sustainable construction and eco-renovation and was the author of the Haynes Eco House Manual. He advises UK government on retrofit programmes and inspects renewable heat installations on behalf of Ofgem. You can chat to Nigel at the Build It Live shows.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Chris Batesmith is Build It's content director. He project managed Build It's real-life Self Build Education House from conception to completion. Find out more and book your visit to the Education House at **www.buildit.co.uk/ourhouse**

PERIOD PROPERTIES
Alan Tierney is a period property and conservation specialist. He ran an historic building consultancy, offering hands-on advice to heritage homeowners, but is now focused on renovating yet another property: Old Barnstaple House.

DESIGN
Opinder Liddar is a director at Lapd Architects (www.lapdarchitects.co.uk). The practice specialises in residential projects from extensions to new builds, making him the ideal person to answer all your home design questions.

PARTY WALLS
Steven Way is a chartered building surveyor and principal of Collier Stevens Chartered Surveyors. He and his practice are specialists in party wall matters. With over 30 years experience in this field, he chairs the Kent Branch of the Pyramus and Thisbe Society – the principal association for Party Wall Surveyors.

PLANNING

Do all the design elements in an approved planning application have to be carried out?

My parents have got planning permission to construct two four-bed detached houses, as well as demolish their existing home to build three terraced properties on the site. However, they are no longer able to do the full scope. As the planning for each aspect was granted under the same submission, if only one of the proposed four-bed houses was built, will that mean that my parents existing home also needs to be knocked down?

In principle, you can part implement a planning permission, ie build one part but not another. For example, if you had approval for a front porch extension and a rear conservatory, you can build the conservatory and decide against the porch, or build it later.

However, as always with planning, you need to be careful that you don't accidentally run into problems and conduct works that would require permission. Make sure that building one part on its own does not contravene any planning conditions on the decision notice, or any legal agreements signed as part of the application.

You must also be sure that the different parts of the permission can be separated without contradicting the council's reasons for granting approval in the first place. For example, if one of the houses is built but the rest of the development is not, does that have implications in terms of what you had originally intended in terms of parking provision, garden sizes, the appearance of the site, biodiversity, flooding etc? If part implementing the permission means you end up with a very different outcome than the council was expecting, and what the planners thought they were assessing, it might raise concerns. You may end up having to demolish the works if they were deemed to be unacceptable.

To be sure, I would recommend making a new application. It is always safest to have approval in place that precisely shows what you intended to do and what was permitted. This way it avoids any disputes in the future and will give you peace of mind.

ISTOCK.COM/SCYTHER5

PARTY WALLS

Is the maintenance to a shared wall my obligation?

My house is one of two mid-terrace properties located on a slope. It's stepped below the adjoining house and both buildings share a wall, built to the apex of my home. If repairs are required to the gable end of my neighbour's dwelling (which is sitting on top/part of the shared party wall), who is responsible for the works?

A party wall or structure divides two buildings. The boundary line between the properties passes through the party wall, usually at its mid-point. In those situations, a wall is considered a party wall to its full height, even if one building does not make use of all of it.

If the boundary runs along the face of the wall, only the section that is shared between the owners is a party wall, so any area projecting above one person's roof may not be a party structure.

In principle, repairs to party walls are considered a shared responsibility and the cost can be divided between each individual. However, the Party Wall Act says that the costs are split between the owners according to a) the use which each owner makes of the wall concerned and b) responsibility for the defect or repair.

Where a section of the wall in question extends above another building, as in the situation described, and only one party uses that part of the wall, it is most probable that they will be liable for the cost of repairs. If there is a dispute as to cost, party wall surveyors will need to be appointed and they will determine liability.

If the section of the wall that extends above another building is not a party wall (ie the boundary line is on the outer face of the wall), then all responsibility for the repair and costs of repair of that area rests with the person who makes use of that section.

WILL SCOTT PHOTOGRAPHY

This double-storey extension to a semi-detached house was designed by Oliver Leech Architects (www.oliverleech.com). The planning permission stipulated that the build could not exceed a certain height near the boundary to protect the neighbours' outlook, hence the shape of the roof

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

What project management software would you recommend?

Do you have any suggestions for any programs to help me with managing my single self build? I would like it to include Gantt charts, with dependencies, lead and lag capabilities.

There's a whole host of project management software out there, most of which is handily available on a try-before-you-buy basis. It would make sense to sign up to a few free trials to see how you get on with them. It is not just about functionality; unless you're already a Gantt wizard, you'll want something you find intuitive and that you can easily build your way into.

When I was project managing the Build It Education House, I went for TeamGantt (www.teamgantt.com), which I found to be very user-friendly. The interface and output are simple to navigate, and it offers project dependencies for sequencing of works – so, you can tell it which tasks need to be completed before others can move forward. These will then remain linked: if something gets delayed, you can shift it further down the line and everything linked to it will move with it. Another useful feature is that you can invite others (professionals, trades etc) to collaborate on tasks. It's a decent platform but not the cheapest available (currently £600 for a year).

I don't recall being able to specifically define lead times in TeamGantt – such as setting, say, a six-week lead time for delivery of the windows. The same would have applied to lag times – ie how many days or weeks need to pass after you've finished something before the next task can begin, such as waiting for screed to cure sufficiently before flooring goes down. Of course, the most basic way to approach lead and lag in a Gantt chart is to simply leave an appropriate gap between the works. Alternatively, you could add relevant tasks such as 'order windows' and 'take delivery of windows' on the appropriate dates and set these as dependencies for earlier/subsequent works.

I'm aware that GanttPRO (www.ganttpro.com) does have a definable lead/lag option for dependencies. I've not used the software in earnest myself, but the price point looks attractive (the Basic version costs around £80 for a year; with the Pro starting at around £125) and there's a 14-day free trial available, so you can try it out before you commit. Some of the platforms aimed at contractors offer more powerful features, including the ability to generate to-do lists, set calendar alerts, directly message collaborators and make the latest project documentation available (plans, drawings, health & safety info etc). However, these tend to start at around £1,000 for a year. Good luck with your project – we'll be keen to hear how you get on with it!

ISTOCK.COM/STURTI

Some self builders are content with generating their own Gantt charts in Excel or similar tools, although this offers a more basic level of functionality

ANY QUESTIONS? Send all your self build, renovation and conversion questions to buildit@castlemedia.co.uk or visit www.self-build.co.uk/question Please note all correspondence may be published in the magazine

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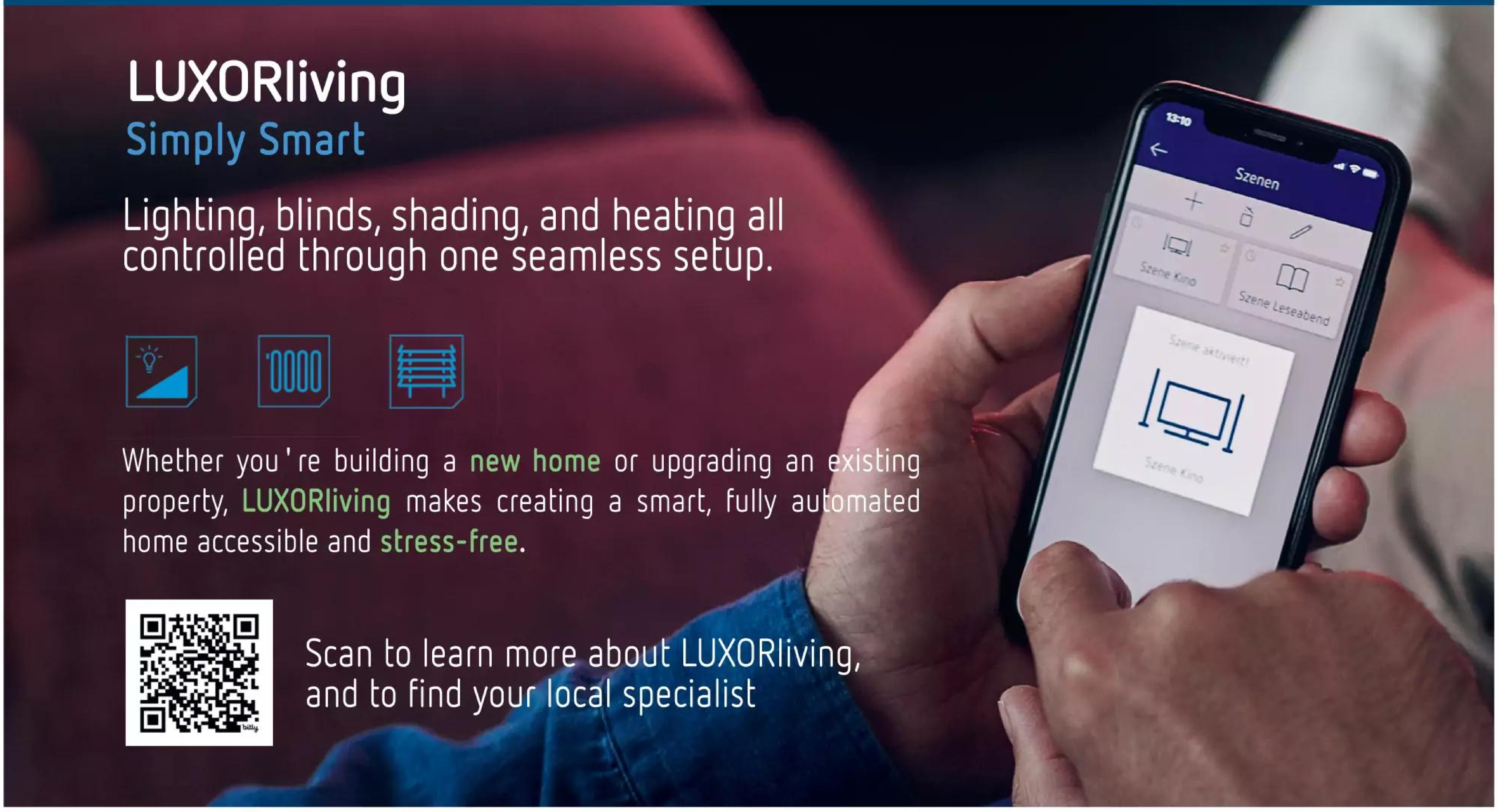

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FIND YOUR DREAM BUILDING PLOT

PlotBrowser.com is a 100% free-to-use plot and property finder, packed with 1,000s of home building opportunities. Here's a taster of the fantastic self build plots, renovation properties and conversions currently for sale near you

PlotBrowser.com is the latest addition to Build It's series of powerful project tools (**www.buildit.co.uk/tools**) designed to put you on the path to self build success.

Updated daily, this is your dedicated resource for finding genuine self build land and renovation opportunities. You'll find 1,000s of plots and properties to view nationwide, and each listing features the site details, photos, guide price and sellers' contact information – including details such as whether the plot or property is being sold at auction and, if so, when.

Crucially, we've done a big part of the plot-hunting job for you: all our plots already have either outline or full planning permission in place, so you won't have to waste your time looking at duds that might never gain consent to build.

What's more, we've sourced the planning reference for you, so that you can quickly and easily identify the current planning consent on the relevant local authority's website. This will arm you with a full understanding of the site's planning history and what's been permitted, so you can gauge whether the plot can support the kind of house you'd like to create.

The following pages are a sample of the plots, renovations and conversion projects available on **PlotBrowser.com** this month.

GOT A PLOT TO SELL?
Head to PlotBrowser.com and register as a seller to list your plot for free.

PlotBrowser from **Build It** magazine

START YOUR PLOT SEARCH

To find more plots with planning permission across the UK, and get free notifications of new opportunities based on your personal criteria, sign up today at www.PlotBrowser.com

TYPES OF BUILDING PLOT

New homes can be built on a range of sites and knowing about the opportunities can help you spot land with potential. Here are the key options:

BROWNFIELD SITES

This refers to previously developed land that is or was once occupied by a permanent structure. Government policy supports the provision of new housing in such locations and, on a practical level, services are likely to be in place.

DEMOLISH & REPLACE

A type of brownfield opportunity where you could knock down a building, such as an old bungalow, and construct a new home in its place. It's often more cost-effective than a renovation as VAT can be reclaimed on a new build project.

EDGE-OF-SETTLEMENT

Depending on the maps in the relevant council's Local Plan, this kind of site may or may not fall within existing built-up area boundaries. Generally, policies allow development within this zone, but control it very strictly outside. Any undeveloped land, known as greenfield, will typically only support housing to serve the needs of agriculture, replacement dwellings and some infill.

INFILL PLOTS

Many councils define this as a small gap between an otherwise built-up frontage or group of houses. Infilling is usually allowed within settlements' development boundaries, and sometimes outside of these. Gaining consent will be more difficult in zones such as conservation areas.

GARDENS

Contrary to the 'backland development' headlines of a few years ago, planners still allow schemes on garden plots, especially in places that are considered to be built-up. You may even be lucky enough to have a large space that could work as a viable site or know someone who is willing to negotiate a fair price.

SERVICED PLOTS

Land that's ready to build on, with utilities, highway access and potentially other infrastructure already in place, as well as at least outline planning consent. This route offers more certainty over early-stage costs.

ENGLAND

BERKSHIRE

MAIDENHEAD
Sawyers Crescent
A single plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a two-bedroom bungalow.
Guide price: £125,000
Planning: Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead 22/03365
Contact: Auction House London 020 7625 9007 info@auctionhouselondon.co.uk
Plot ID: 136667

NEWBURY
Hamstead Marshall
Plot with planning permission for the conversion of the existing dwelling into four residential dwellings.
Guide price: £1,200,000
Planning: West Berkshire Council 24/00582/FUIL
Contact: Carter Jonas 01635 263000 newbury@carterjonas.co.uk
Plot ID: 136749

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

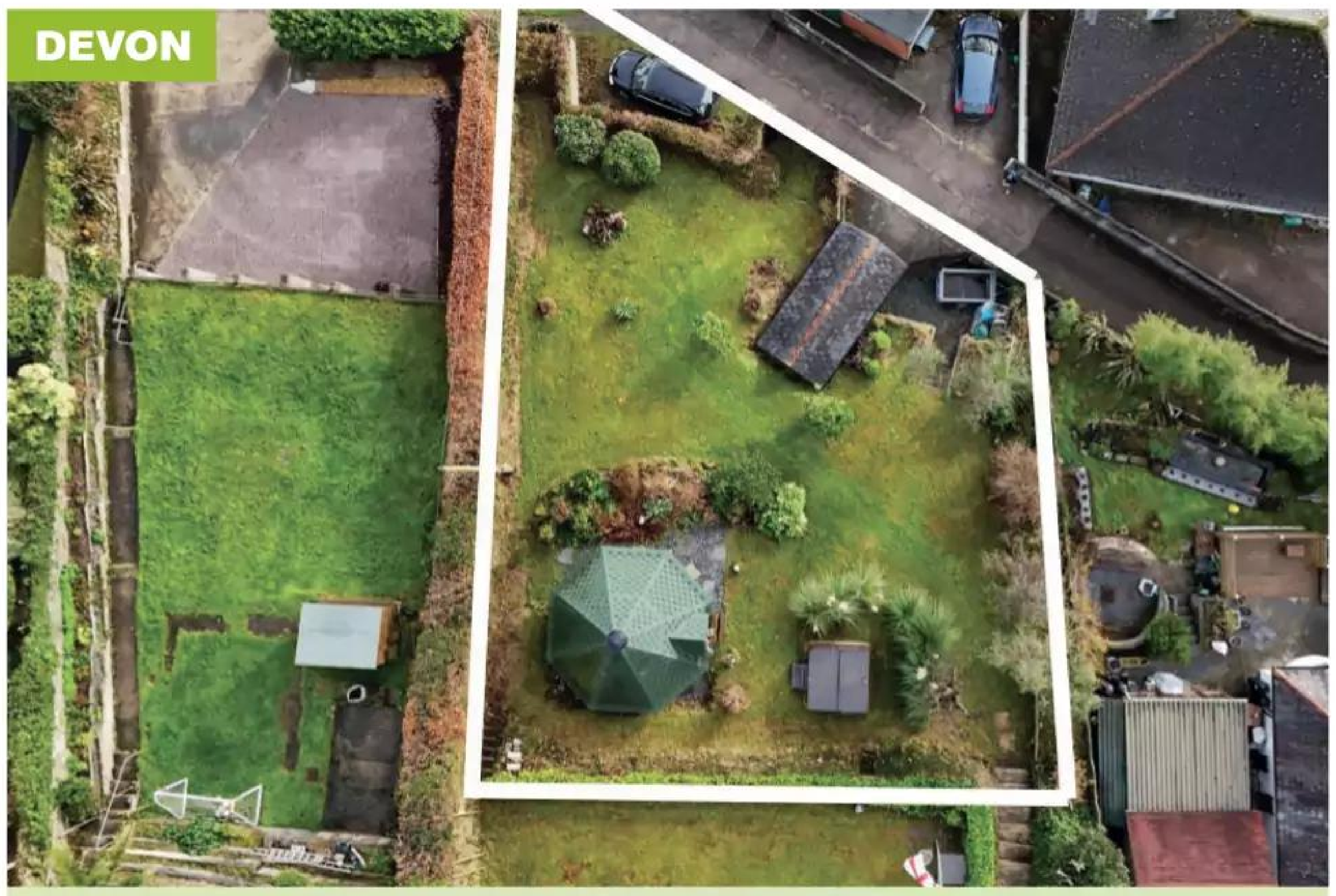
BURNHAM
37a Lincoln Hatch Lane
Plot of land next to Burnham Grammar school with a planning permission to build a four-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £600,000
Planning: South Buckinghamshire District Council PL/21/2465/FA
Contact: Private seller 07578 785929 shakthiraj@gmail.com
Plot ID: 136601

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

CHATTERIS
High Street
Plot of land with planning permission granted for the construction of a three-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £110,000
Planning: Fenland District Council F/YR20/0780/F
Contact: Ellis Winters 01354 694900 info@elliswinters.co.uk
Plot ID: 136734

GREAT PAXTON
High Street
Single plot of around 0.11 acres with full consent for a four-bedroom detached home of around 160m^2.
Guide price: £215,000
Planning: Huntingdonshire District Council 22/01426/FUL
Contact: Brown & Co Barfords 01480 213811 tim.davies@brown-co.com
Plot ID: 136603

DEVON



TAVISTOCK
Maudlins Lane
A south-facing plot of land with planning permission in place for the construction of a single detached dwelling.
Guide price: £125,000
Planning: West Devon Borough Council 0343/24/opa
Contact: Exp World UK 01462 228653 adam.day@exp.uk.com
Plot ID: 136588

CHESHIRE

CREWE
Underwood Lane
Single plot of land with permission granted for the construction of a two-bedroom bungalow.
Guide price: £60,000
Planning: Cheshire East Council 24/0181 N
Contact: Vetta Properties 01270 397392 vettaproperties@outlook.com
Plot ID: 136642

CORNWALL

COADS GREEN
Langstone Villa
Plot measuring 380m^2 with full consent for a three-bedroom detached house. The plot is in a secluded position with great views.
Guide price: £115,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA22/09899
Contact: Private seller 07981 310005 theeverys@hotmail.co.uk
Plot ID: 136659

ST. MAWES
Hannock Lane
Plot with planning permission to convert or demolish and rebuild the current building into a two-storey, three-bedroom detached house with parking and garden.
Guide price: £425,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA23/04684, PA22/10255
Contact: H Tiddy & Sons 01326 270212 sales@htiddy.co.uk
Plot ID: 136606

COUNTY DURHAM

BISHOP AUCKLAND
Low Etherley
A plot of land with planning permission for up to four dwellings.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Durham County Council DM/23/01835/OUT
Contact: Savills 01904 617800 york@savills.com
Plot ID: 136740

PETERLEE
Loaning Burn
Plot of land with planning permission for one three-bedroom and a four-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £140,000
Planning: Durham County Council DM/21/02745/OUT
Contact: Kimmitt & Roberts 0191 584 8080 info.houghton@kimmittandroberts.com
Plot ID: 136622

CUMBRIA

BOWNESS-ON-WINDERMERE
Beechwood Close
Plot with consent for a three-storey, three-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £95,000
Planning: Carlisle City Council 7/2012/5601
Contact: Auction House Cumbria 01228 510552 cumbria@auctionhouse.co.uk
Plot ID: 136738

DEVON

HONITON
Exeter Road
A plot with planning permission for a detached four-bedroom bungalow.
Guide price: £175,000
Planning: East Devon District Council 22/0296/FUL
Contact: Stags 01404 45885 honiton@stags.co.uk
Plot ID: 136742

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

LYDBROOK
Hangerberry
A 1-acre plot with full consent to replace the current building with a two-bedroom bungalow.
Guide price: £300,000
Planning: Forest of Dean District Council P0707/22/FUL
Contact: Dean Estate Agents 01594 835751 coleford@deanestateagents.co.uk
Plot ID: 136650

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

LITTLE HARROWDEN
Kings Road
A plot of land measuring no more than $37m^2$, with full permission in place for a single property.
Guide price: £325,000
Planning: Wellingborough Borough Council nw/24/00009/ful
Contact: The Property Experts 0330 179 8180 hello@thepropertyexperts.co.uk
Plot ID: 136727

NEWTON ABBOT
Torquay Road
Plot with planning permission for a three-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: Teignbridge District Council 23/01643/FUL
Planning: Bettesworths 01803 212021 enquiries@bettesworths.co.uk
Plot ID: 136643

DORSET

DORCHESTER
Winterbourne Steepleton
A single building plot with planning permission for a three-bedroom, barn-style detached dwelling.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: West Dorset District Council wd/D/20/00/1841
Planning: Symonds & Sampson 01305 261 008 dorchester@symondsandsampson.co.uk
Plot ID: 136708

LYME REGIS
Pine Ridge
Plot of land with planning permission granted for the comstruction of a five-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: West Dorset District Council P/ful/2021/00704
Contact: Symonds & Sampson 01308 422092 sallen@symondsandsampson.co.uk
Plot ID: 136726

EAST SUSSEX

HELLINGLY
Cheviot Street
Plot of land with outline planning permission for the construction of a two-bedroom, detached property.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Wealden District Council wd/2019/2542/mao
Contact: Fox & Sons 01323 843554 Hailsham@fox-and-sons.co.uk
Plot ID: 136584

EAST YORKSHIRE

FOSTON-ON-THE-WOLDS
Main Street
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a single detached residential dwelling.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: East Riding of Yorkshire Council 4/03109/OUT
Contact: Auction House Dee Atkinson & Harrison 0845 400 9900 simon@dee-atkinson-harrison.co.uk
Plot ID: 136597

ESSEX

LITTLE BADDOW
Morrels
A 1.2-acre plot on the corner of ancient woodland with planning consent for the erection of a $400m^2$ passive house of ICF construction.
Guide price: £995,000
Planning: Chelmsford City Council 22/00945/S73
Contact: Private seller 07767 898771 paulbibbypbc@gmail.com
Plot ID: 136692

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

DURSLEY
Hunger Hill
Plot of land with planning permission granted for the construction of a three-bedroom dwelling.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: Stroud District Council S.23/1604/ful
Contact: Hamptons International 01453 751666 stroud@hamptons-int.com
Plot ID: 136640

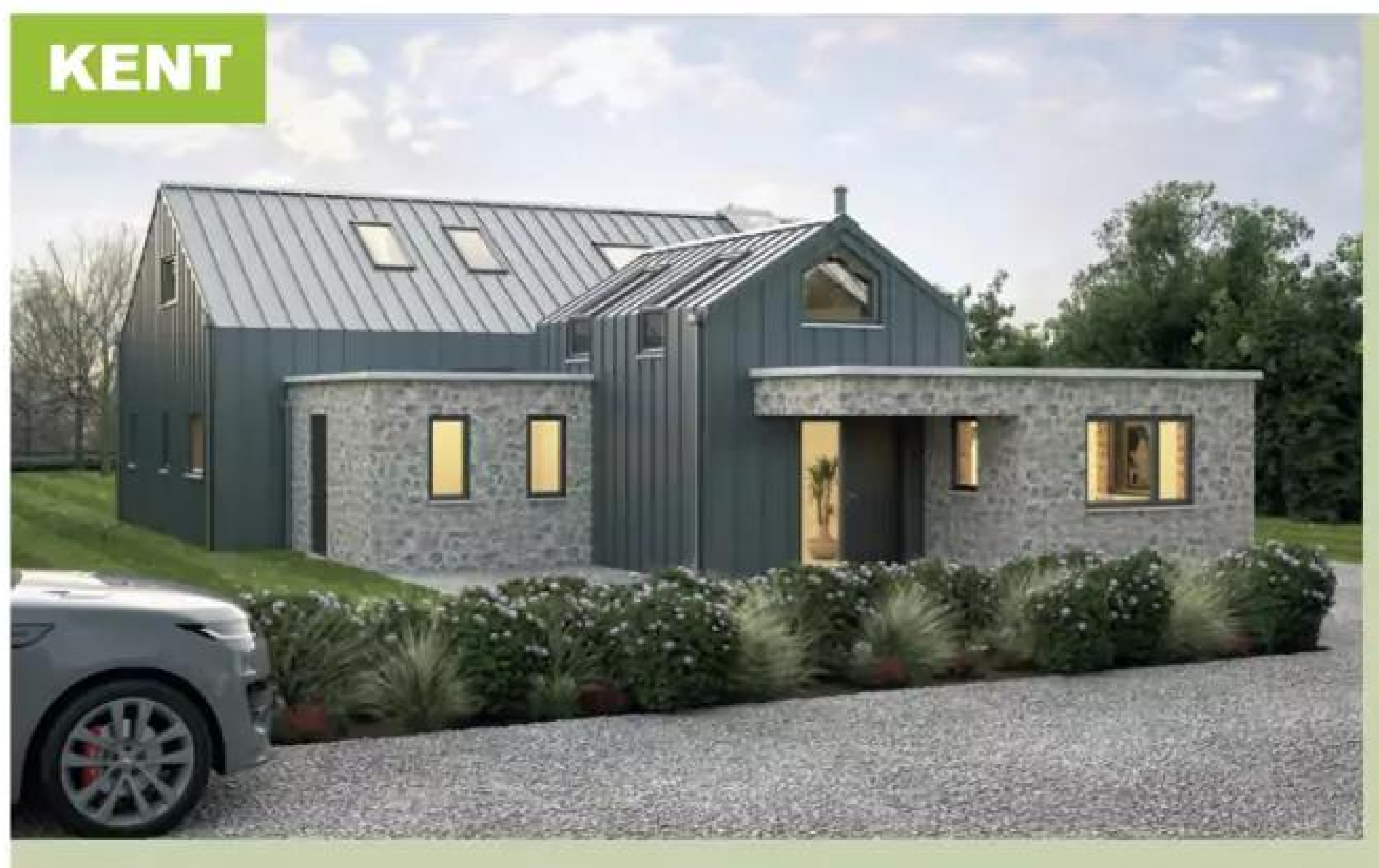
GREATER LONDON

BEXLEYHEATH
Braeside Crescent
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a two-storey, two-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £110,000
Planning: London Borough of Bexley 23/00971/FUL
Contact: Allsop LLP 0207 543 6780 resiauction@allsop.co.uk
Plot ID: 136661

HAMPSHIRE

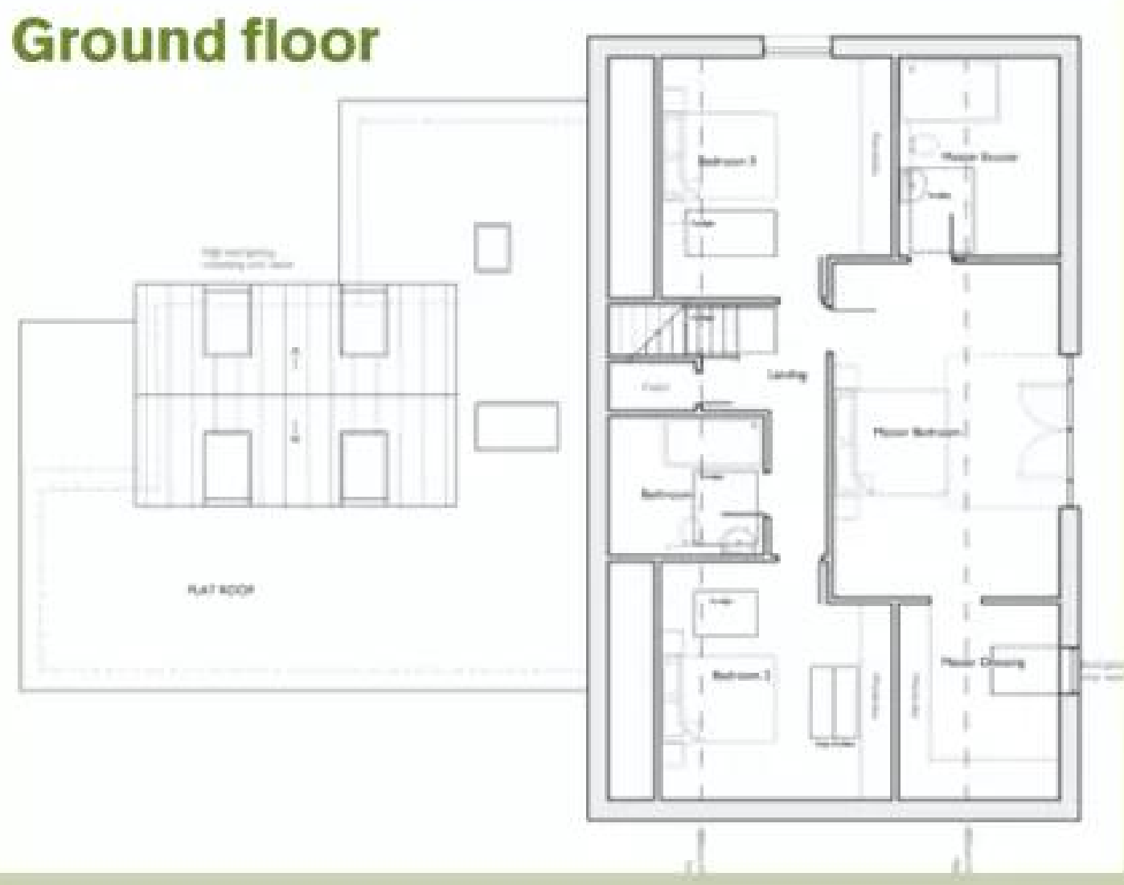
CHRISTCHURCH
Room Hill Road
Plot with planning permission for a three-storey, five-bedroom dwelling.
Guide price: £1,500,000
Planning: Christchurch Borough Council 8/24/0264/FUL
Contact: Jordan Marks Estates 01202 979861 admin@jordanmarksestates.co.uk
Plot ID: 136632

KENT

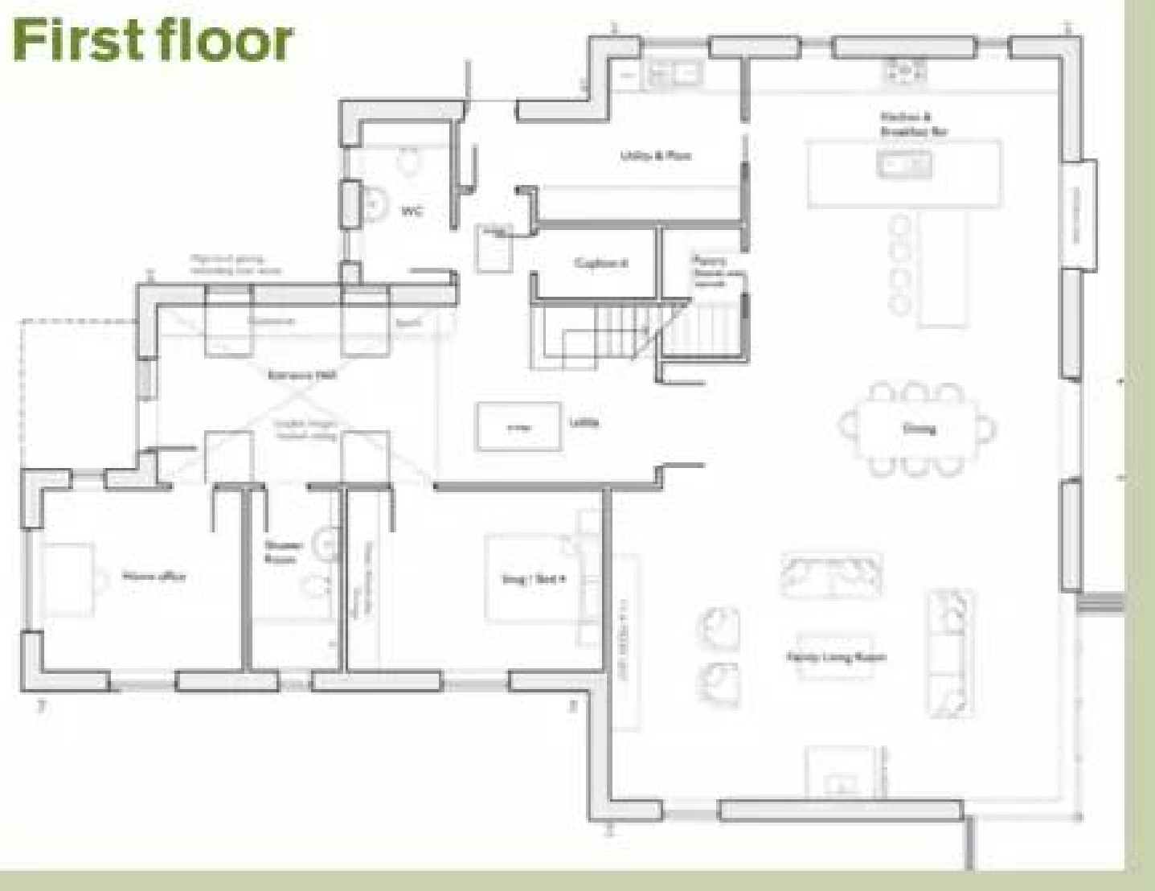


PROMOTED PLOT

Ground floor



First floor



LODGE FARM, MARDEN
Land with planning permission for the demolition of the existing agricultural barn and the erection of a single chalet bungalow with associated access, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements. The current plans allow for a four-bedroom chalet bungalow with an open-plan family/sitting/dining room.
Guide price: Excess of £475,000
Planning: Maidstone Borough Council 24/500504/FULL
Contact: 07940 230741 anske@walbax.co.uk
Plot ID: 136566

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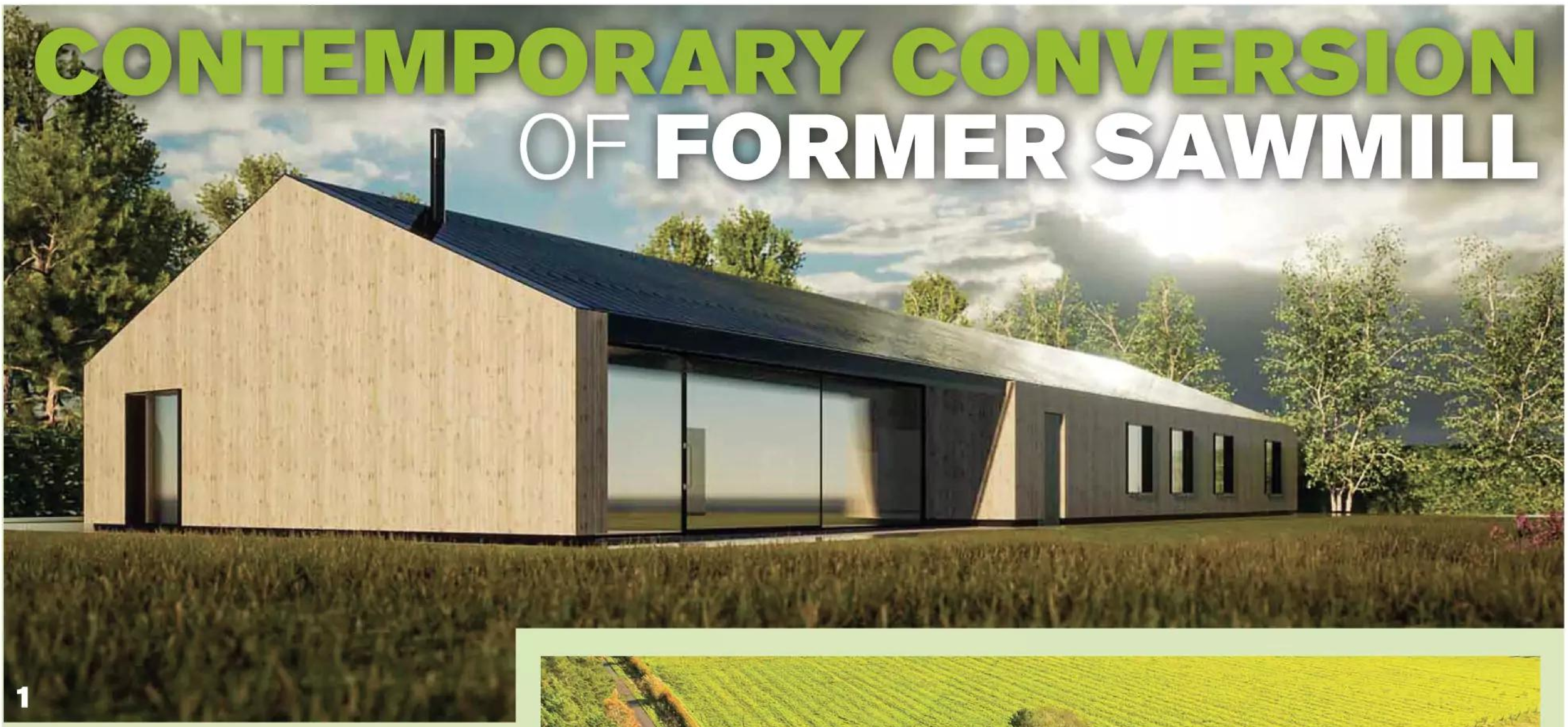
CONTEMPORARY CONVERSION OF FORMER SAWMILL



LOCATION Healeey, Northumberland

GUIDE PRICE £500,000

AREA 0.7 acres

PLANNING Northumberland County Council 24/02433/ful

CONTACT Finest Properties
01434 622234
corbridge@finestgroup.co.uk

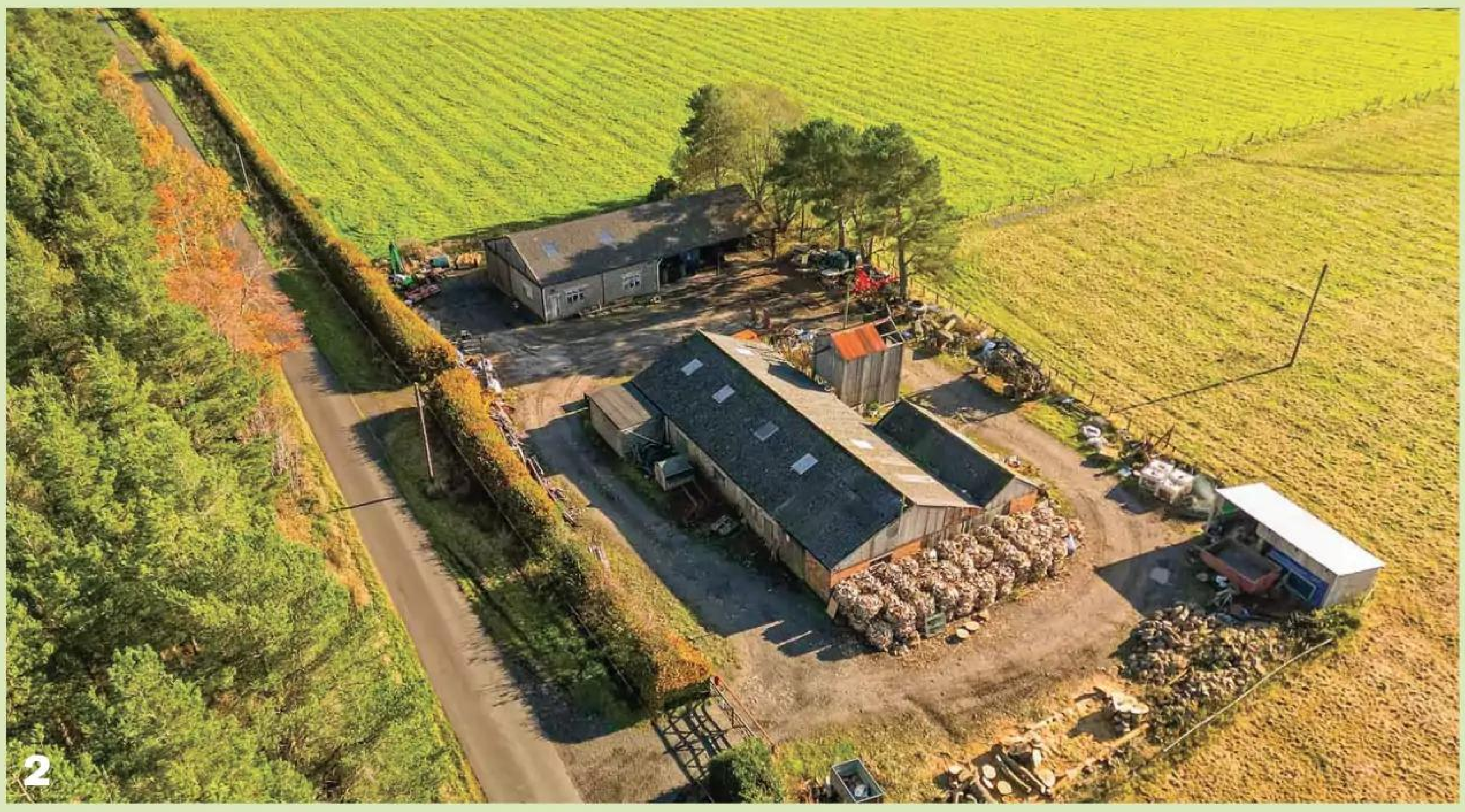
Plot ID: 136673

Once a traditional sawmill, this 0.7-acre site currently comprises a range of agricultural outbuildings, situated in the picturesque Tyne Valley countryside.

Planning permission has been granted for the demolition of the site's existing structures and the conversion and extension of the existing sawmill building into a four-bedroom home. The plans propose a striking, modern single-storey design, with CGI images and plans available on request from the agent.

Set within countryside and woodland, there is a second large building on the plot of land that, although not eligible for residential conversion, could serve as a studio, home office or storage space, or could even be adapted for equestrian purposes. Additional land may be available by separate negotiation.

Healey is a rural estate situated between Riding Mill and Slaley, the former of which is a commuter village with a good range of amenities, including a pub, two village halls, schools, churches of various denominations, local clubs and societies, and a deli and cafe. Newcastle city centre is within easy reach of the site, providing extensive cultural, educational, recreational and shopping opportunities.



1 The finished single-storey home will be strikingly modern in design

2 The smallholding is set within the peaceful and rural Tyne Valley

3 There are various outbuildings that are to be demolished or converted for residential purposes

4 Stunning countryside views as far as the eye can see will be enjoyed from the new property

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NORTH YORKSHIRE

HUTTON BUSCELL
Main Street
A 0.3-acre plot of land with planning permission in place for the construction of a three-bedroom detached property with a garage.
Guide price: £120,000
Planning: North York Moors National Park Nym/2024/0239
Contact: CPH Property Services 01723 352235 sales@cphproperty.co.uk
Plot ID: 136729

HEREFORDSHIRE

BISHOPSWOOD, ROSS-ON-WYE
Orchard Heights Land, Leys Hill
Full planning consent is secured in perpetuity for three premium houses. The plot measures 1.74 acres with up to two acres available by negoatiation.
Guide price: £885,000
Planning: Herefordshire Council P212222/F
Contact: Private seller 07899 873258 william_cansdale@hotmail.com
Plot ID: 136709

HERTFORDSHIRE

TRING
Beaconsfield Road
Plot of land with existing three-bedroom property and land with consent for the construction of a three-bedroom dwelling.
Guide price: £875,000
Planning: Dacorum Council 23/00545/FUL
Contact: David Doyle 01442 248671 boxmoor@daviddoyle.co.uk
Plot ID: 136647

LANCASHIRE

CONISTON
Waterhead Farm Barn & Orchard
Plot with consent to convert the existing barn into two residential dwellings and for the construction of an additional detached dwelling.
Guide price: £430,000
Planning: Lake District National Park 7/2023/5304, 7/2024/5197
Contact: Thomson Hayton Winkley 01539 447825 windermere@thwestateagents.co.uk
Plot ID: 136752

LEICESTERSHIRE

QUORN
Unitt Road
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a three-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £120,000
Planning: Charnwood Borough Council P/23/1450/2
Contact: William H Brown 01509 214686 loughborough@sequencehome.co.uk
Plot ID: 136583

LINCOLNSHIRE

WINTERTON
Northlands Road
Plot with consent for a four-bedroom, detached dwelling and garage.
Guide price: over £100,000
Planning: North Lincolnshire Council PA/2024/20
Contact: Private seller 07799 483445 bhffarmshop@gmail.com
Plot ID: 136585

NORFOLK

STOKE FERRY
Lime Kiln Lane
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a four-bedroom detached property.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council 21/01226/F
Contact: The Norfolk Agents 01328 862395 info@thenorfolkagents.co.uk
Plot ID: 136609

NORTH YORKSHIRE

EAST APPLETON
Catterick Lane
Plot of land with planning permission granted for the change of use of two barns from agricultural building to residential dwellings.
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: Richmondshire District Council ZD/00152/APDN
Contact: George F White 01833 690 390 sales@georgefwhite.co.uk
Plot ID: 136621

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

WHITTLEBURY
6 Park Close
A building plot of just over one acre in a tranquil setting. Full consent is granted for a large family home.
Guide price: £600,000
Planning: West Northamptonshire Council 2023/6397/FULL
Contact: Howkins & Harrison 01327 363575 karen.bishop@howkinsandharrison.co.uk
Plot ID: 136608

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

KNEETON
Slacks Lane
Plot with planning permission for a two-storey, two-bedroom dwelling.
Guide price: £260,000
Planning: Rushcliffe Borough Council 22/02309/ful
Contact: Richard Watkinson & Partners 01949 836678 bingham@richardwatkinson.co.uk
Plot ID: 136624

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

DONCASTER
High Street
Plot of land with consent for a four-bedroom detached house following the demolition of the site's existing workshop building.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council 21/03049/FUL
Contact: Your Move 01302 340444 doncaster@your-move.co.uk
Plot ID: 136590

SUFFOLK

RED LODGE
Boundary Road
Plot of land with detailed planning consent for two substantial detached houses with a triple garage and accommodation above.
Guide price: £425,000
Planning: Forest Heath District Council DC/18/0453/var
Contact: William H Brown 01638 713274 mildenhall@williamhbrown.co.uk
Plot ID: 136742 589

SURREY

EAST HORSLEY
Woodland Drive
Plot with consent for a detached five-bedroom home with five bathrooms.
Guide price: £1,000,000
Planning: Guildford Borough Council 23/P/00113
Contact: Knight Frank LLP 01932 591600 cobham@knightfrank.com
Plot ID: 136620

EPSOM
Dorking Road
Plot of land with planning permission granted for a detached bungalow.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: Epsom and Ewell Borough Council 18/00770/FUL
Contact: McHugh & Co 020 7485 0112 sales@mchughandcompany.co.uk
Plot ID: 136750

WEST YORKSHIRE

HALIFAX
Darnes Avenue
Two plots with planning consent for a pair of two-bedroom detached homes.
Guide price: £49,950 each
Planning: Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council 21/01570/FUL
Contact: 360 Estates 01422 230404 info@360estateshalifax.com
Plot ID: 136646

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

BAWTRY
Sycamore Crescent
A single plot with planning consent for a two-bedroom detached bungalow with parking and gardens.
Guide price: £325,000
Planning: Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council 24/00765/ful
Contact: William H Brown 01302 710735 doncaster@williamhbrown.co.uk
Plot ID: 136727

CARMARTHENSHIRE

PENIEL
Llwynmartin
A 15-acre smallholding with consent for a four-bedroom detached home. There is also a 604m^2 outbuilding on the site and a condemned adjoining five-bedroom bungalow.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: Carmarthenshire Council PL/02886
Contact: Morgan & Davies 01267 312729 carmarthen@morgananddavies.co.uk
Plot ID: 136702

SCOTLAND

ANGUS

DUNDEE
Tealing
A plot of land with planning permission already granted for the construction of six dwellings.
Guide price: £325,000
Planning: Angus Council 18/00689/Full
Contact: Future Property Auctions - Glasgow 0345 646 1117 info@futurepropertyauctions.co.uk
Plot ID: 136656

ARGYLL AND BUTE

AROS
Salen
Building plot with planning consent for the construction of a single detached residential dwelling.
Guide price: £65,000
Planning: Argyll and Bute Council 18/02364/PP
Contact: Bell Ingram 01631 566122 oban@bellingram.co.uk
Plot ID: 136746

TARBERT
Clachan
Plot of land with planning permission in principle for the construction of a single detached home.
Guide price: £65,000
Planning: Argyll and Bute Council 20/01962/PP
Contact: Robb Residential 0141 225 3880 sales@robbresidential.com
Plot ID: 136744

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

DUMFRIES
New Abbey Road
Plot of land with planning permission for a single-storey detached dwelling.
Guide price: £130,000
Planning: Dumfries and Galloway Council 24/1435/pip
Contact: Yopa 01322 584475 hello@yopa.co.uk
Plot ID: 136674

EAST AYRSHIRE

DARVEL
Lochore Terrace
Plot of land with planning permission in principle for the construction of a detached residential dwelling.
Guide price: £35,000
Planning: East Ayrshire Council 24/0063/PPP
Contact: Donald Ross Residential 01563 550088 kilmarnock@donaldross.co.uk
Plot ID: 136641

FIFE

ST. ANDREWS
Strathkinness High Road
Plot of land with planning consent for a four-bedroom detached home.
Guide price: £465,000
Planning: Fife Council 19/03630/FUL
Contact: Rettie & Co 01334 237700 standrews@rettie.co.uk
Plot ID: 136611

HIGHLAND

ONICH
The Glebe
Plot with planning consent granted for the erection of a four-bedroom detached property.
Guide price: £125,000
Planning: Highland Council 21/05525/FUL
Contact: Fiuran Property 07872 986164 info@fiuran.co.uk
Plot ID: 136610

WEST LOTHIAN

BROXBURN
Plot 4, Station Road
Plot of land with planning permission in place for the construction of a four-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £73,000
Planning: West Lothian Council LIVE/0294/FUL/17
Contact: Future Property Auctions - Glasgow 0345 646 1117 info@futurepropertyauctions.co.uk
Plot ID: 136591

LINLITHGOW
Philpstoun
Plot with planning consent in place for the conversion of the existing dwelling into a three-bedroom house.
Guide price: £275,000
Planning: West Lothian Council 0309/ful/24
Contact: Paul Rolfe 01506 828282 linlithgow@paulrolfe.co.uk
Plot ID: 136577

WALES

CARMARTHENSHIRE

CARMARTHEN
Heol Rudd
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a two-storey, two-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £55,000
Planning: Carmarthenshire County Council PL/05196
Contact: Terry Thomas & Co 01267 235330 sales@terrythomas.co.uk
Plot ID: 136725

JOHNSTOWN
Alltycnap Road
Plot of land with planning permission in place for the construction of a pair of four-bedroom dwellings.
Guide price: £45,000
Planning: Carmarthenshire County Council PL/06268
Contact: Paul Fosh Auctions 01633 254044 info@paulfoshauctions.com
Plot ID: 136715

GLAMORGAN

DUNVANT
Fairwood Road
Single building plot with planning permission for the construction of a detached dormer bungalow.
Guide price: £125,000
Planning: Swansea Council 2021/1857
Contact: Dawsons 01792 646060 sw@dawsonsproperty.co.uk
Plot ID: 136639

GORSEINON
Penybanc Lane
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a three- to four-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £75,000
Planning: Swansea Council 2023/1050
Contact: Dawsons 01792 646060 sw@dawsonsproperty.co.uk
Plot ID: 136638

POWYS

PONT ROBERT
Riverside Vista
A 1.2-acre plot with full planning permission for three houses. Elevated position with river views.
Guide price: on application
Planning: Powys County Council Refer to Agent
Contact: Private seller 07779 378654 sabah1237@hotmail.com
Plot ID: 136657

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In Focus

Architects & designers

We take a closer look at the myriad benefits a skilled and experienced design professional can bring to your self build, renovation or extension project

One of the first questions often asked by people extending, renovating or self building is, "Do I need an architect?" Depending on the scale of your project and the route you're taking – for instance, if you're working with a package home company – it might be that you don't need the services of an independent design practice. However, it's useful to understand the value they can bring to your project.

Who is qualified to develop my design?

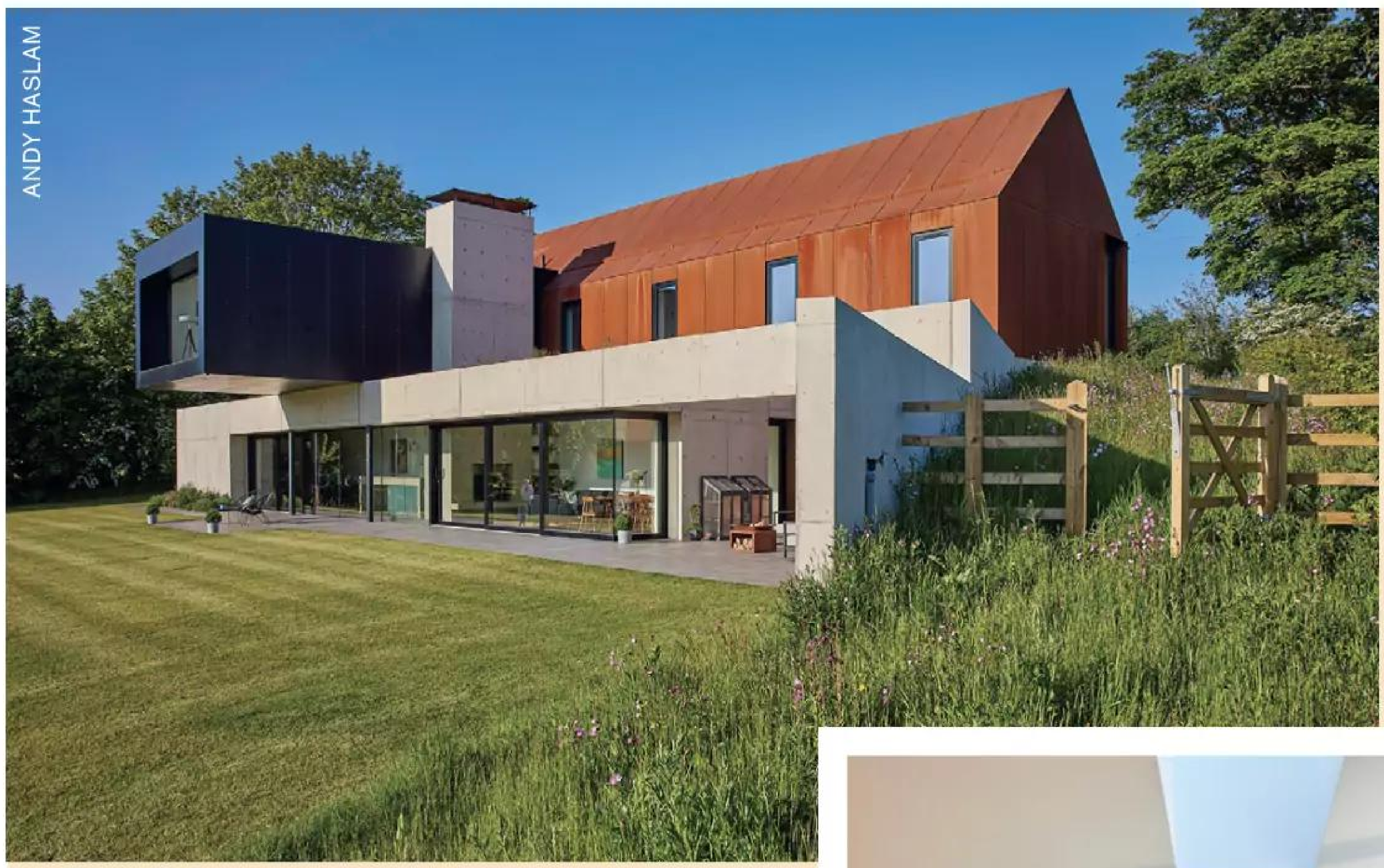
It's important to clarify that only professionals registered with the Architect's Registration Board (ARB) can legally use the title 'architect'. Most will be chartered members of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), too.

You could also work with a chartered architectural technologist on your self build, extension or renovation – anyone with this title should be registered with the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT).

You might select someone that falls into the category of 'house designer' – though this type of professional will not have the same formal training and qualifications as architects or architectural technologists. So, if you do go down this route, it's even more vital to do your due diligence, check previous work and speak to past clients.

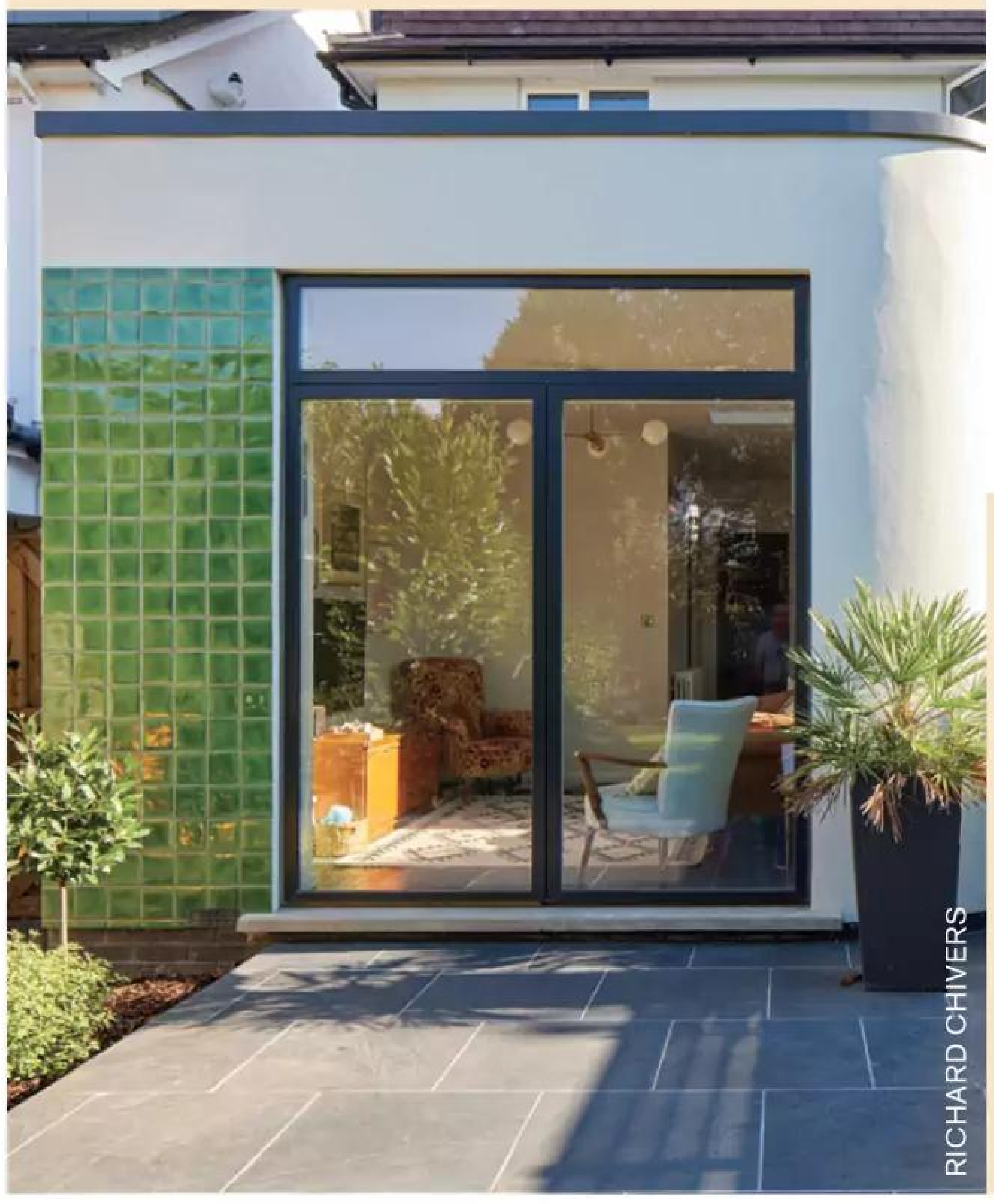
What value can professional design add to my project?

Design flair is one of the main qualities we tend to associate with architects and technologists. These professional designers are trained specifically on how to assess an existing house or plot and come up with creative ways to deliver and enhance your original brief – all while keeping your budget in mind. In addition to basic sketch drawings, they can create realistic 3D walk-throughs of your proposed plans, which can be very useful when navigating the planning process.



ANDY HASLAM

Above: The owners of this striking home in Lincolnshire worked with ID Architecture (www.idarchitecture.co.uk) to develop the design for their house. Thanks to its position in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the scheme was approved by planning under Paragraph 55 (now Paragraph 80), which requires a design of exceptional quality and innovation



RICHARD CHIVERS

Left & above: YARD Architects (www.yardarchitects.co.uk) developed the design for this extension to a 1930s house in South London, drawing on the aesthetic of the original house for inspiration. For instance, the curved structure that has been added to the rear of the property mirrors the beautiful, curved bay window at the front

An experienced professional will also be up to date with the latest construction systems and technologies. So, they'll have a key role in transforming your house plans into a buildable reality. They'll have a deep understanding of the planning system and the expertise to guide you through the process, too. Most practices have a vast network of recommended contractors and trades, too, who they can put you in touch with for various stages of the project. Plus, they should be clear on the rigorous standards required by current Building Regulations. If you wish, you can also engage the services of your architect or technologist as project manager, in which case they'll take on responsibility for ensuring the work meets the required quality standards as the build progresses.

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Having successfully achieved planning permission on several new build properties across the home counties, Flint Architects were approached by a growing family seeking to replace their poorly built 60's home in Berkhamsted.

Their brief called for a modern house that maximised the small plot with additional bedrooms, greater garden space and improved sustainability credentials.

Located adjacent to Berkhamsted Castle, a Scheduled ancient monument, the proposal required a sensitive approach to design. Flint Architects worked closely with the clients and local council to generate a proposal that satisfied the requirements of all stakeholders.

The resulting building has accommodation spread across multiple levels increasing the GIA by 150sqm. A muted material palette of grey brick and silvered timber defines each layer of the building and connects the new structure with the neighbouring castle.

FLINT ARCHITECTS

Tel: 01296 920622 **Web:** www.flintarchitects.co.uk

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This project unlocked the potential of an existing internal swimming pool and transformed it into a beautifully landscaped swimmers' paradise. The existing pool was housed in an ugly 1970s building which divided their garden. The clients' brief was to make the pool external and create connections with a tennis court and lawns through a new poolside pavilion. This provides pool facilities as well as relaxing and socialising spaces. Extended eaves provide solar shading and cover an external dining area and integrated barbecue facilities. PVs, heat pump and high levels of insulation provide a low energy solution.

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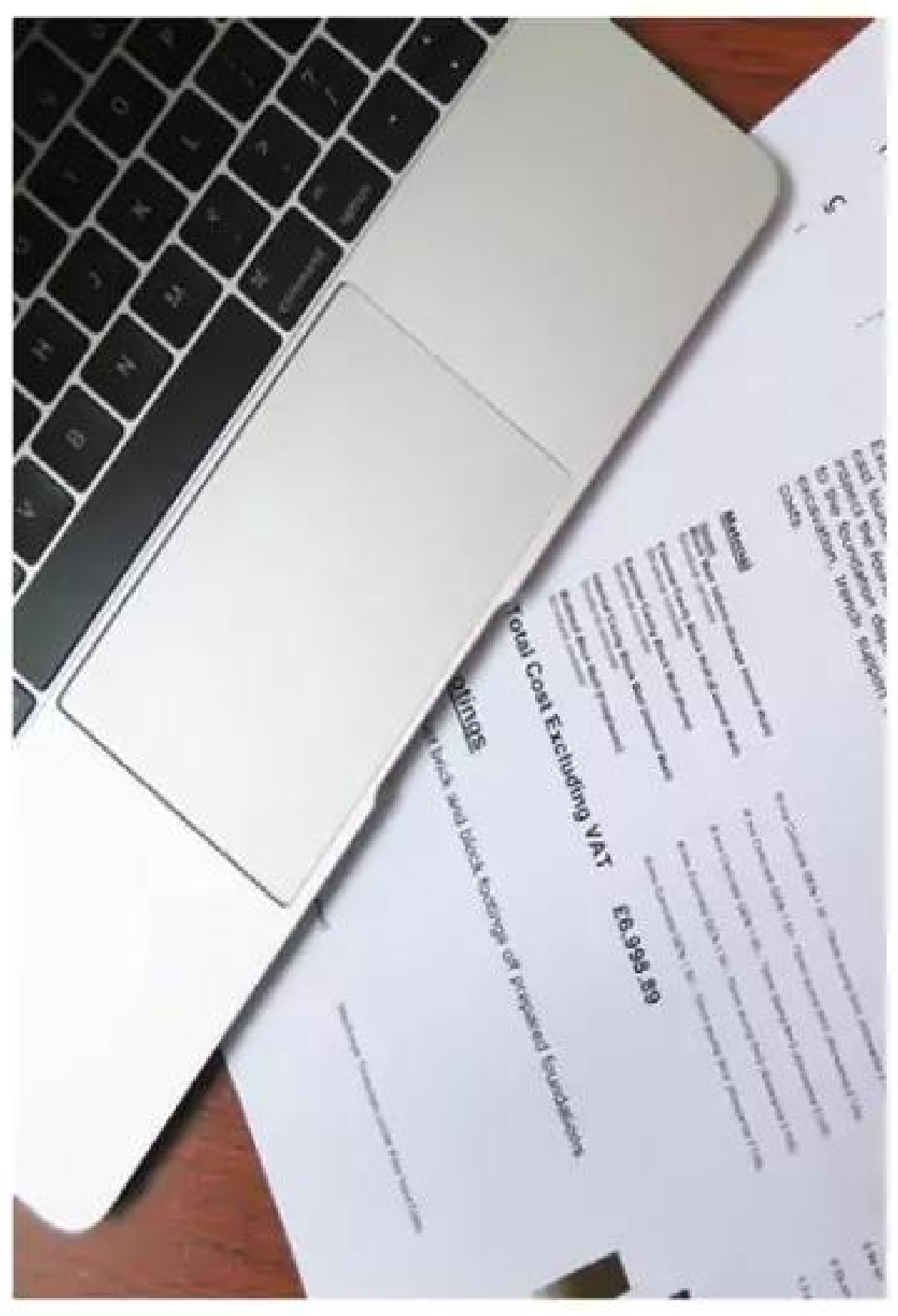
Tel: 012258 51860 **Web:** www.hetreedross.com



Looking to add space and value to your home?

If you're thinking about extending your home, knowing a realistic cost before you meet with builders can be vital. Not only will it help you to negotiate the cost of the job but it will also help you better understand your options of finishes and fittings and how this will impact the overall price. This tailored costing service includes a schedule planner and cashflow forecast for your extension – essential if you're looking to get a loan for your project.

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We design homes that are bold, contemporary and of the highest quality. All our designs are carefully considered to realise and unlock the potential of one's home and site, whilst catering for the specific needs of our clients. Our homes aim to create a deep connection to their surroundings and a sense of place.

Known for open, light-filled spaces, rich materiality, precise detailing and a strong connection between inside and outside living, we balance striking architecture with the diverse requirements of domestic life. They are usually family homes, loved by our clients.

From extensions and renovations of suburban houses, listed buildings or city apartments through to complex new build houses, all our projects share the same focus on understated luxury that defines the modern house.

We have an unrivalled track record of delivering the most demanding projects. We feel comfortable navigating complex briefs, planning processes and building to the highest standards.

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Studio M R Architects

We are an established architectural practice with offices in Kentish Town, North London, and Bruton, Somerset. Our studio has undertaken a broad range of projects for both commercial and private clients, and understands fully the process of taking instruction, developing a brief in collaboration with our clients and realizing completed building projects.

We take a holistic approach to design, whether it is for a new-built home, extension or renovation. Our practice expertly manages the delivery of all stages of a project, from conception and planning, through detail design, to construction, including listed buildings and projects in conservation areas.

Our studio is renowned for meticulously crafted new-build and refurbishment projects tailored to the client's programme, context and site.

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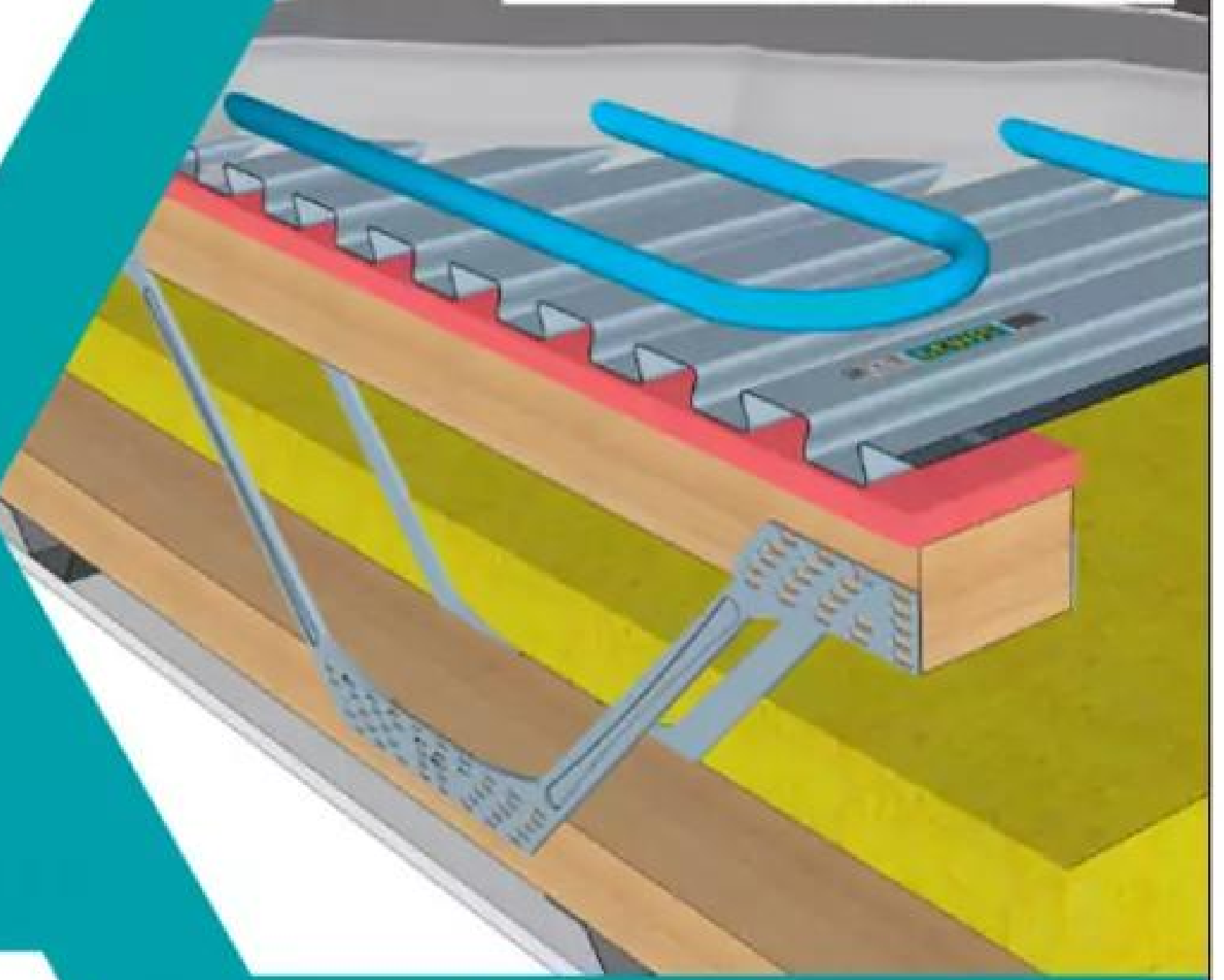

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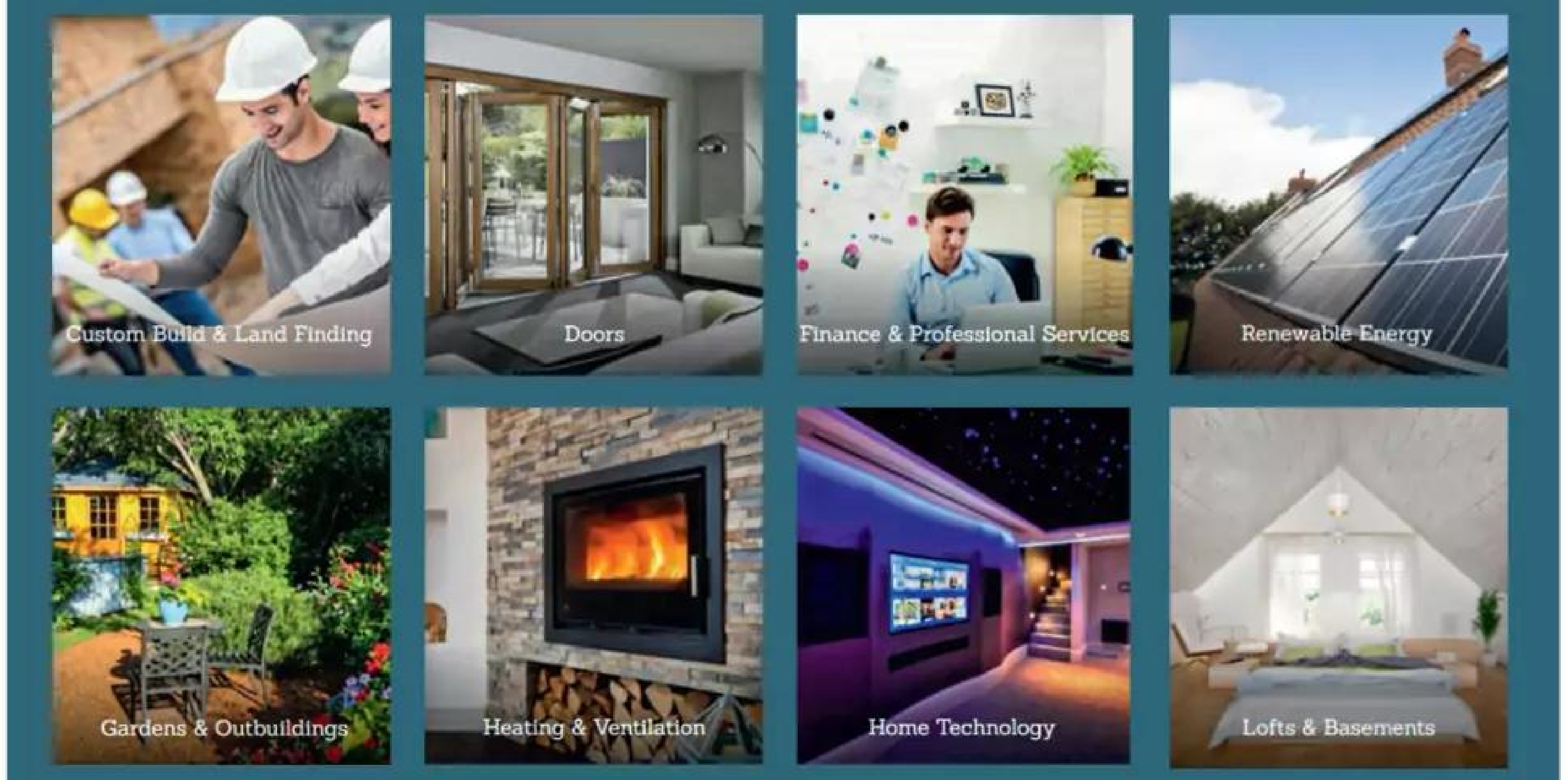

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ARCHITECT'SVIEW

From gauging your attic's potential to maximising your budget, Curtaz Studio's **Marco Curtaz** shares his tips on how to make your build a success

Loft conversions on a budget

What's the best way to determine if re-designing your loft space is the right project for you?

The two most obvious initial deciding factors are whether you have a sufficient budget and an actual need for the space. In general, an all-in price for this type of project would be between £70,000 to £120,000, depending on size and scope. This would range from a basic, small box dormer to a larger, higher-spec addition, possibly including a more complex L-shape or works like re-roofing or a hip-to-gable extension. Fittings and finishes can also make a big difference to the total spend. Something that not all homeowners are aware of before they take on a loft project is that scaffolding is expensive, especially with a tin hat, so be sure to factor this in as it is essential for safety and keeping out the elements.

However, if you can, don't be afraid to spend more money on your project, as this kind of scheme can transform your home and how you use it. For instance, a hip to gable conversion can add 10-15% to your build costs, but will allow for a larger box dormer with better rooms and stair access, which can add a lot of value to your property.

You need to ensure you have sufficient head height and footprint to house the rooms you want. If the roof has a strange hip or angle, you'll need to have enough budget to overcome this impediment.

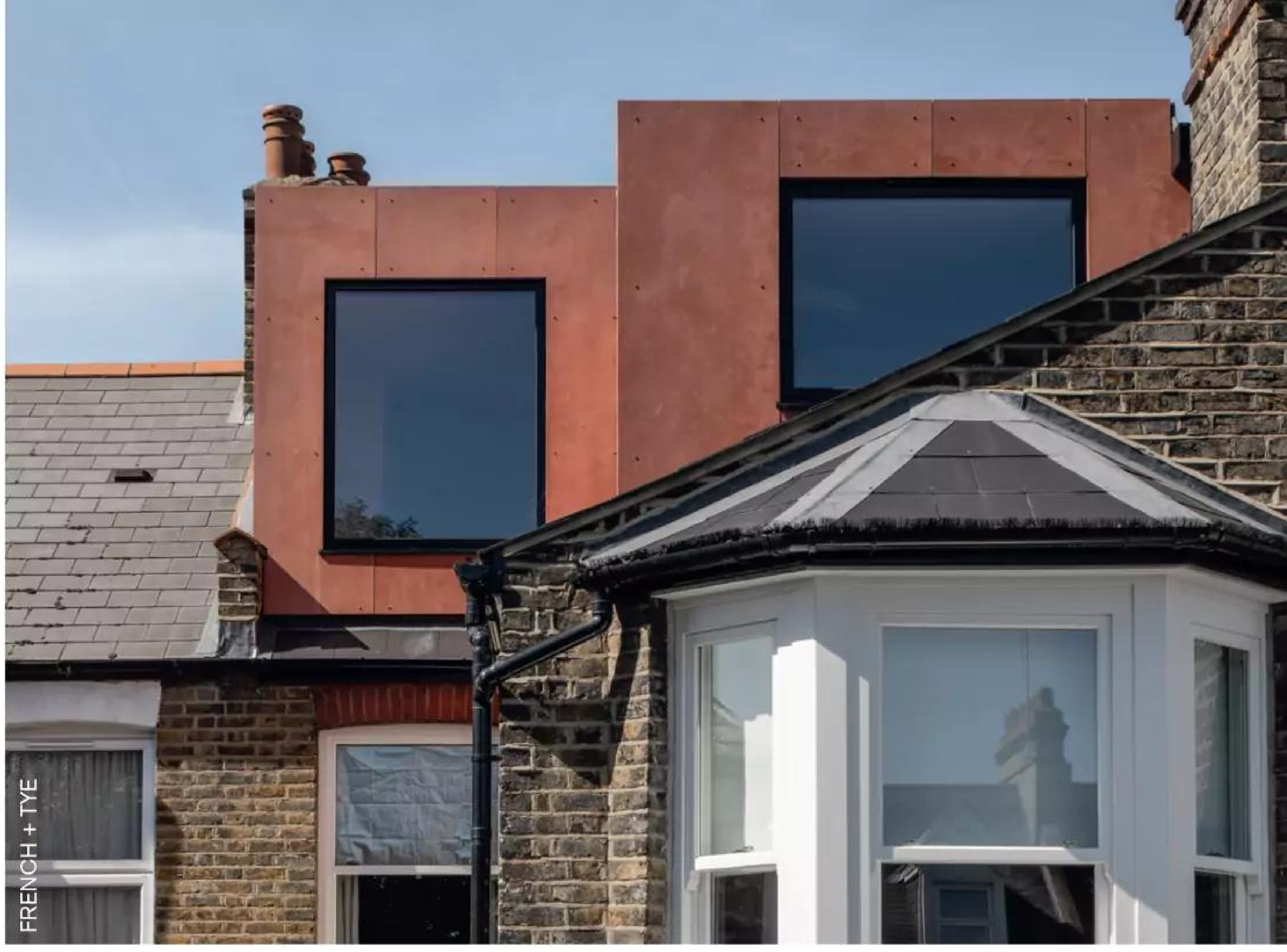
Are there any regulations that need to be considered when designing an attic conversion?

Some loft conversions can be done under permitted development (PD) rules, while others will need planning approval. With PD, the guidelines are prescriptive and must be followed to be acceptable. What is deemed applicable varies from council to council, so make sure you check with your architect or local authority before you start.

That being said, there are some common factors that need to be thought through. Visually, planners tend to be unfavourable to lofts that can be seen from the street frontage, so bear this in mind if you are designing a structure that juts out or can be viewed from the side. Ensure you are clear on the cubic volume you are allowed. Under PD a detached or semi-detached house is allowed 50m³ while a terraced house cannot exceed 40m³. If you want to go beyond these limits, try out more adventurous forms and materials, or you live in a flat, then you will need to apply for full planning permission.

Planners only tend to allow minimal amendments to the lofts of listed buildings or those in conservation areas – if any. So, I would always recommend researching what will be permissible early on.

Fire safety is another important consideration for your new loft space. As you're adding a new level to your home, which is usually a second floor, building control won't deem the windows as a safe exit in the event of a fire. You will need to create a fire-protected enclosure from the loft to the ground floor exit using smoke alarms and fire-rated doors to habitable rooms, but this is straightforward.



Above: Designed by Curtaz Studio, this modern loft conversion ties in visually with new ground floor additions while responding to surrounding materials. The L-shaped dormers are crafted to maximise space and provide a work from home studio, shower room and master bedroom with picture window seat

If, however, you are going beyond this height or would like a design that breaches the fire protected enclosure, such as an open-plan entrance you will need to invest in sprinklers or an alternative fire system that requires specialist calculations. Your architect or designer will know of a selection of fire engineers in your area.

Should the space continue the aesthetic of the rooms below or have its own distinct style?

Architects tend to be trained to sympathetically separate old and new structures in residential housing, as it's something that planners like to see in proposals. Within planning applications, officers take into account how the proposed addition will be differentiated from the original dwelling externally, both in terms of form and materiality.

Try matching the new stairs to the existing to create some flow between the spaces, so the new area doesn't feel completely cut off. Mirroring what is already there is also much more cost effective. Then choose more modern doors, ironmongery and interior details, so that the top floor feels spatially different. By making the stairs the place of transition between the old and new spaces you create a nice distinction without such a stark, uncomfortable contrast.

Are there any strategies that can help to reduce costs when creating a new layout?

The cheapest route would be to go with a loft builder and choose a simple, cookie cutter conversion. This might not look the nicest, but you'll get the space you want, and the contractors are knowledgable. I would recommend making sure that the layout you pick is right for your brief, even if the extra design work comes at a slightly increased price. The tailored layout will not only enhance your experience of your property, but the build price will be virtually the same as a catalogued configuration.

When it comes to lofts, it may sound counterproductive, but the best way to be cost-effective is to spend a little more at the outset. For example, opting for aluminium glazing and a highly durable waterproofing system will require a greater upfront cost, but such products will last much longer than cheaper, plastic windows or felt roofing. Unique cladding is also a great way to create something a bit more interesting, and although it will cost more than standard finishes, you'll end up with a high-quality and personalised aesthetic.

Marco Curtaz is the founder and director of Curtaz Studio, a London-based practice specialising in innovative contemporary extensions, renovations, interiors and new builds. For more information call **07966 904469** or visit **www.curtazstudio.com**

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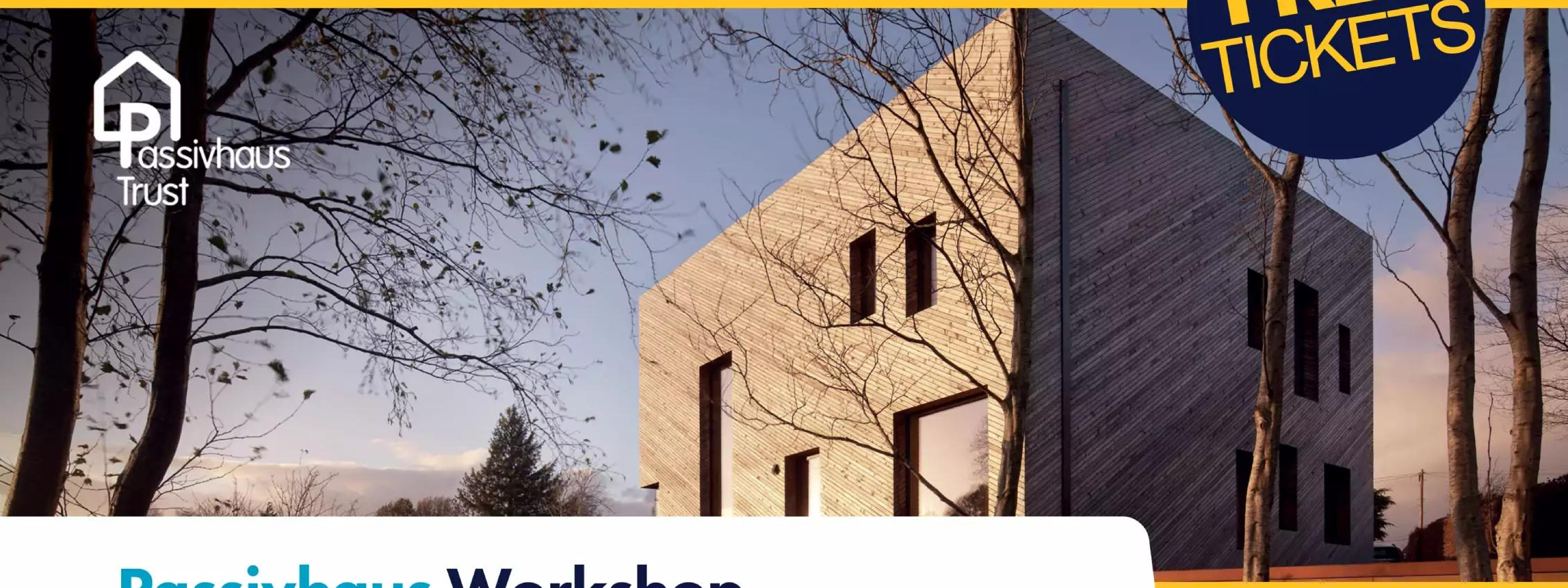

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